精霊の守り人

SEIREI NO MORIBITO

GUARDIAN OF THE SACRED SPIRIT

BY: FUJIWARA KAMUI

CHAPTER 1: BALSA, THE FEMALE BODYGUARD

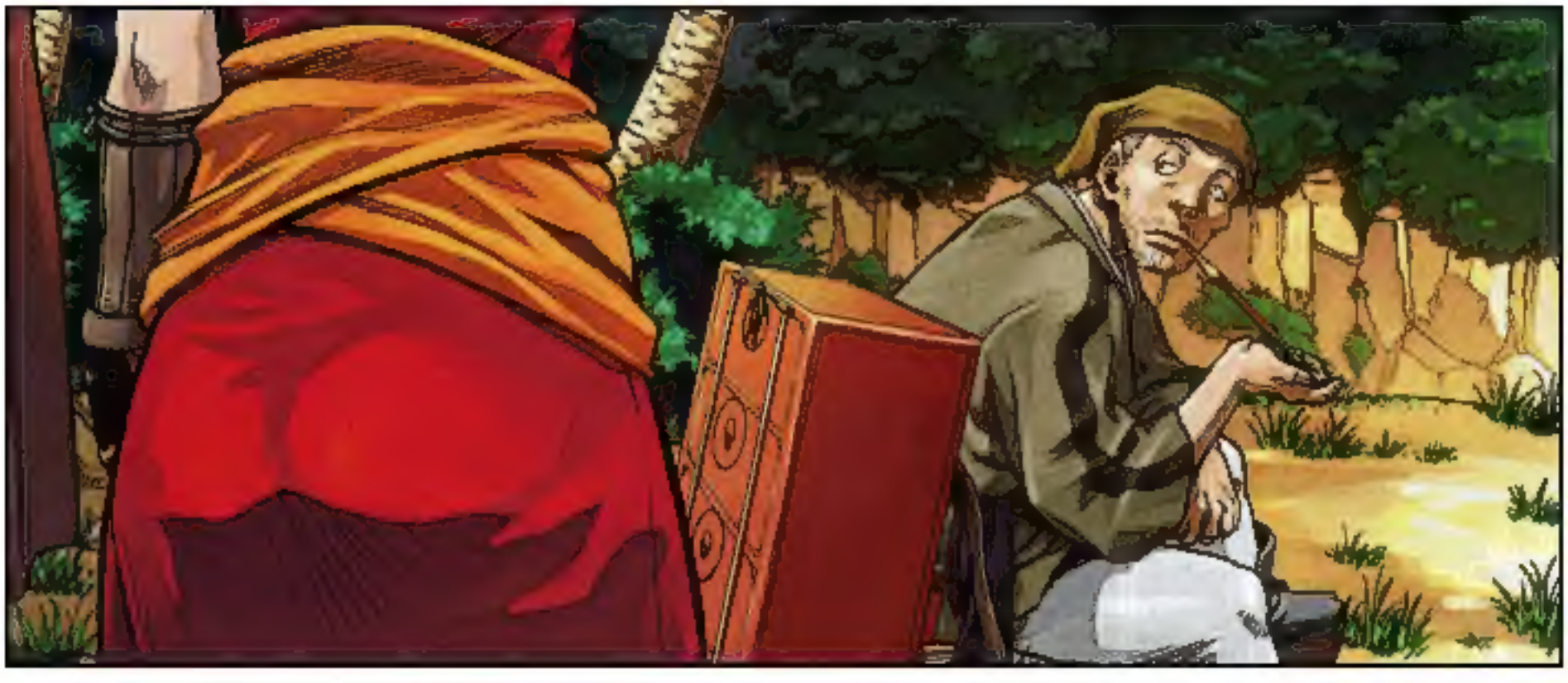
FLY, NAHJI, FLY!

IF YOU FLY TO THE SEA,

RAIN WILL FALL, AND THE EARS OF RICE WILL GROW AND GROW...

NEW YOGO EMPIRE

YOGO'S A FINE PLACE. IT MAKES ONE FEEL AT PEACE...



FEMALE WARRIORS ARE RARE...

FROM THE LOOKS OF YOU, I'D SAY YOU'RE FROM KANBAL...

HM? NOT FRIENDLY, ARE YOU... OR ARE YOU MUTE?

OOF.

SFX: ROAR

SFX: CREAK CTREAK

IT'S THE LONG AUTUMN RAINS... THE RIVER'S SWOLLEN..

IT'S THE SECOND PALACE'S OXCART...

...

UH-OH ...

HEY! YOU...

THAT BANNER... IT MUST BE THE SECOND PRINCE AND HIS ENTOURAGE. THEY MUST BE RETURNING TO THE IMPERIAL CITY FROM THEIR MOUNTAIN VILLA.

I HAVE NO OBLI-GATION TOWARDS THEM...

I'M NOT FROM HERE.

SFX: MOOOO

!

M O O O

SFX: GAGAGA

SFX: CRASH

SFX: GYAGYAGYA (WHEELS GRATING)

SFX: THUD

SFX: GAKUN (COLLAPSE)

SFX: GIGIGIGI (TOPPLING)

A A A H !

PEOPLE... DAMN!

SHURU (UNWINDING ROPE)

SFX: GARAGARAGARA (COLLAPSE/FALL)

SFX: SUCHA (EQUIPPING)

スチャ..

SFX: BUN (THROW)

SFX: GUI (TUG)

SFX: GA (JAB)

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

SFX: ZABA (DIVE)

SFX: GYLIN (ROPE SNAPPING TIGHT)

SFX BUBBLE: BUHA (GASP)

SFX BUBBLES: HAA HAA (PANT/GASP)

SFX: GOO (ROAR)

THERE HE IS..

SFX: ROAR

SFX: ZABA (DIVE)

DAMN...

WHAT?!

THE CURRENT...

SFX· GYUN (FAST MOTION)

SFX: DODODO (ROAR)

AH!!

BUHA

SFX: DODODO (ROAR)

GOOD... LOOKS LIKE HE FAINTED RIGHT AWAY... HE DIDN'T SWALLOW ANY WATER

HAA HAA HAA HAA

COUGH COUGH

GUI

SFX: ZAA (ROAR)

YOUR HIGHNESS!!

THE WAY SHE MOVED... THERE'S NO MISTAKE; THAT'S THE FAMOUS FEMALE BODYGUARD...

WHAT THE HELL...?

BALSA THE SPEARWIELDER!!

NOT AT ALL... THIS HARDLY REPAYS YOU FOR HAVING SAVED THE PRINCE'S LIFE.

EVEN THOUGH THIS WONDERFUL FEAST WAS PROBABLY WASTED ON SOMEONE AS LOWLY AS MYSELF.

I THOR-OUGHLY ENJOYED THIS MEAL.

THE SECOND EMPRESS HERSELF HAS REQUESTED THAT YOU SPEND THE NIGHT IN THE PALACE.

SFX: CLATTER

PLEASE TELL HER MAJESTY THAT I AM GRATEFUL ENOUGH FOR THE FEAST.

NO... THAT WOULD BE IMPOSING ON YOUR GENEROUS HOSPITALITY FAR TOO MUCH.

BALSA-DONO... PLEASE, DO AS WE ASK...

NO, NO...

SFX. WHISPER WHISPER

BECAUSE OF WHO YOU ARE, THERE'S SOMETHING WE'D LIKE TO ASK OF YOU...

ヒソヒソ

...HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?!

THERE WAS A MERCHANT ON TORIKAGE BRIDGE AT THE SAME TIME AS YOU..

DO YOU NOT REMEMBER?

FORGIVE US, BUT WE HAVE ALREADY LOOKED INTO YOUR BACK-GROUND.

IT'S SAID THAT EVERY SINGLE MERCHANT IN THESE PARTS KNOWS YOUR NAME...

YA!

THE BATHS HERE ARE HEAVENLY! YOU SHOULD TAKE YOUR TIME AND ENJOY THEM -- IT'LL BE SOMETHING TO REMEMBER...

NOW, PLEASE ACCEPT OUR REQUEST.

THUMP

I THINK I GOT MYSELF IN TROUBLE... AND I DON'T THINK I CAN BACK OUT OF IT ANYMORE, EITHER...

SFX: ZABA (WATER SOUND)

SFX: ZABA (WATER)

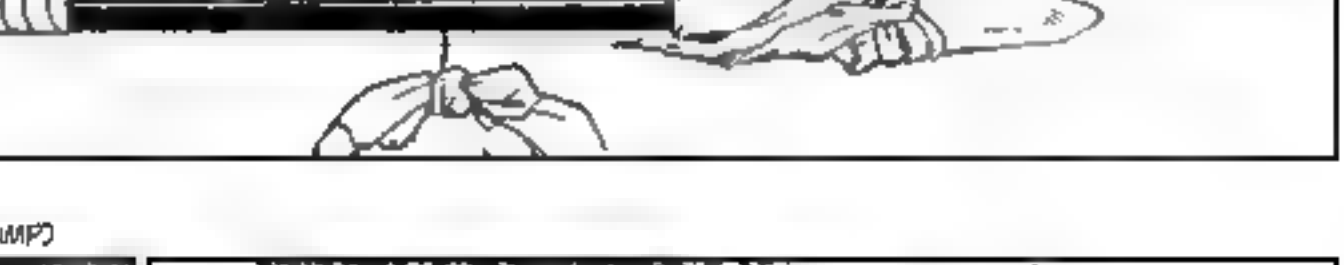
I GUESS NOW'S NOT THE TIME TO BE SO CAREFREE...

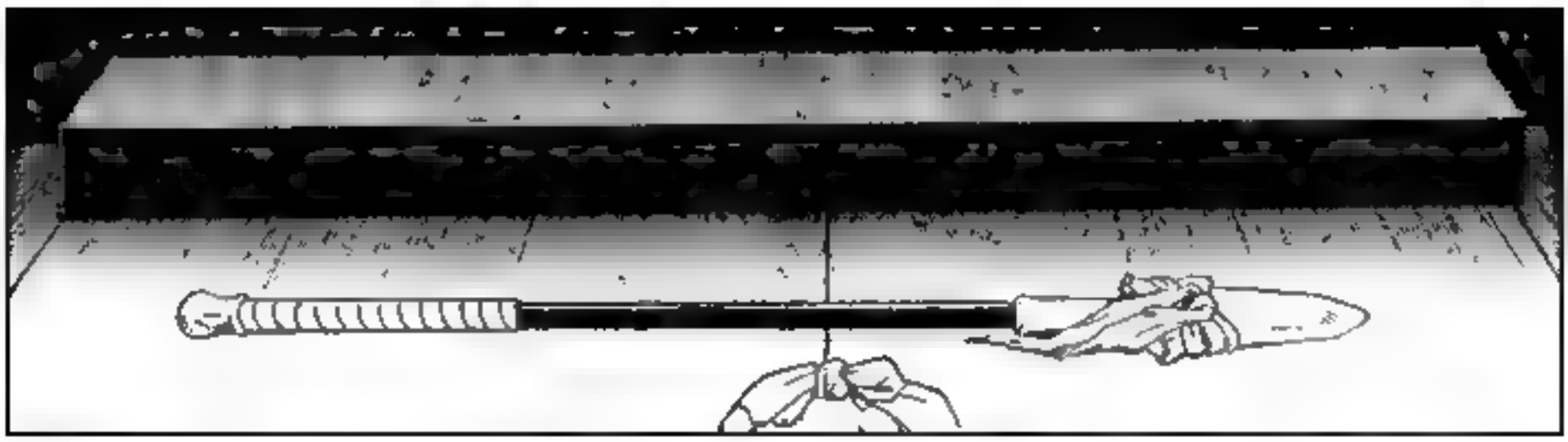
UP ABOVE, THE HEAVENS ARE FULL OF STARS... AND BELOW THEM LIES THE LIGHT OF THE LIVING. WHAT A MAGNIFICENT SIGHT.

IN THE RIVER...

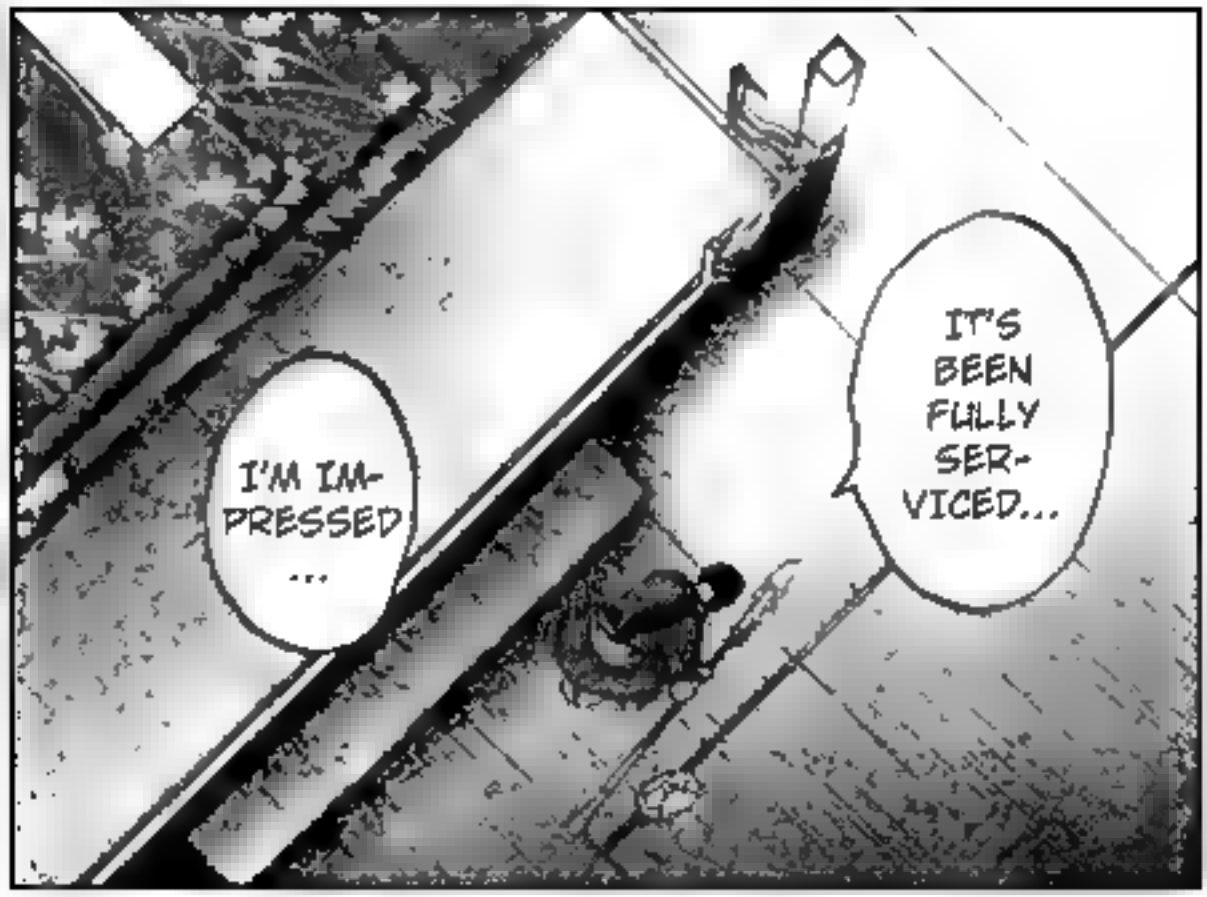
FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, IT FELT AS THOUGH THE VERY CURRENT HAD STOPPED.

I WONDER WHAT WAS GOING ON.





SFX: BAFU (THUMP)

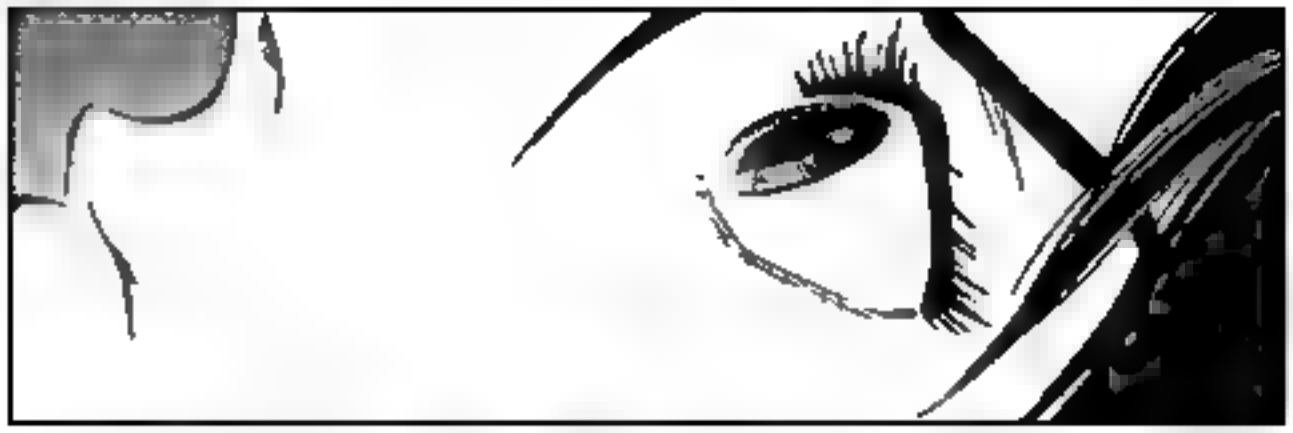


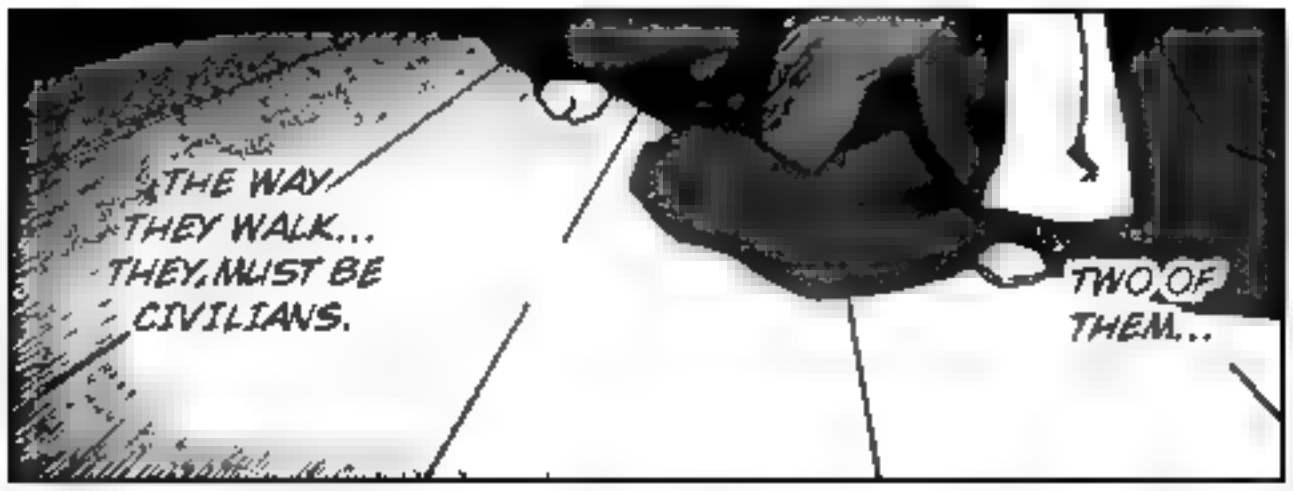
I WONDER IF THE REASON THESE PEOPLE SEEM WORLDS APART FROM US IS BECAUSE THEY SLEEP ON BEDS LIKE THIS EVERY NIGHT.

MMM

SIGH

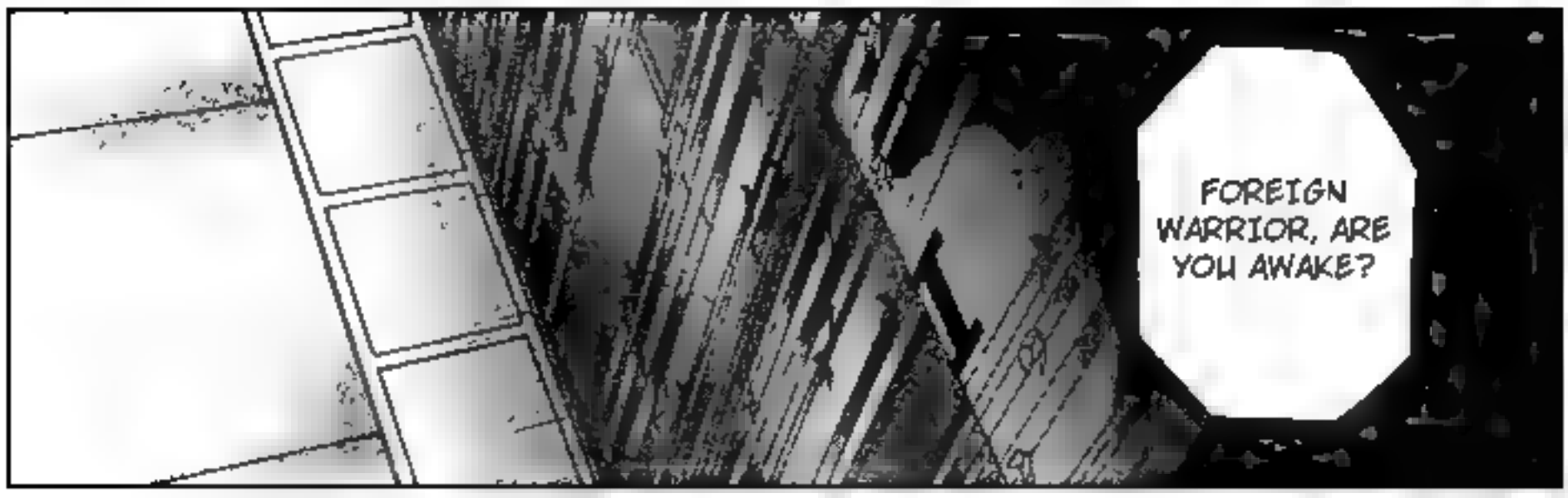
SFX BUBBLE (INSECTS): CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP




THE WAY THEY WALK... THEY MUST BE CIVILIANS.
TWO OF THEM...

CREAK

CREAK


FOREIGN WARRIOR, ARE YOU AWAKE?

I AM.
PLEASE,
ENTER.

SFX BUBBLE: SH (MOVING)

!!

スッ

THE SECOND PRINCE... THEN... THIS WOMAN MUST BE THE SECOND EMPRESS...!!

BUT YOU... YOU DID WELL...

THANK YOU FOR SAVING THE PRINCE TODAY... YOU DOVE INTO THE TURBULENT WATERS FROM THAT HIGH BRIDGE WITHOUT HESITATION... EVEN A MAN WOULD HAVE THOUGHT TWICE.

AT SUCH A LATE HOUR.

YOU MUST BE WONDERING WHY WE HAVE COME TO YOU...

.....

RAISE YOUR HEAD, BALSA...

THEY SAID THAT YOU PROTECT LIVES FOR A LIVING DESPITE BEING A WOMAN... THAT YOU'RE A WANDERER WHO RESEMBLES THE PEOPLE OF THE DISTANT NORTHERN KINGDOM OF KANBAL... THAT YOU SPEAK EVERY SINGLE LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN THESE LANDS, AND THAT YOU HAVE SAVED MANY LIVES WITH THAT SPEAR...

AS COMMONERS WOULD PUT IT, I AM A BODYGUARD... I AM HIRED TO PROTECT OTHERS FOR MONEY.
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, THOSE STORIES HAVE ALL BEEN GLORIFIED...

IN OTHER WORDS, IF I PAY YOU MONEY, THEN YOU'LL PROTECT ANYONE I CHOOSE?

WELL, NO...

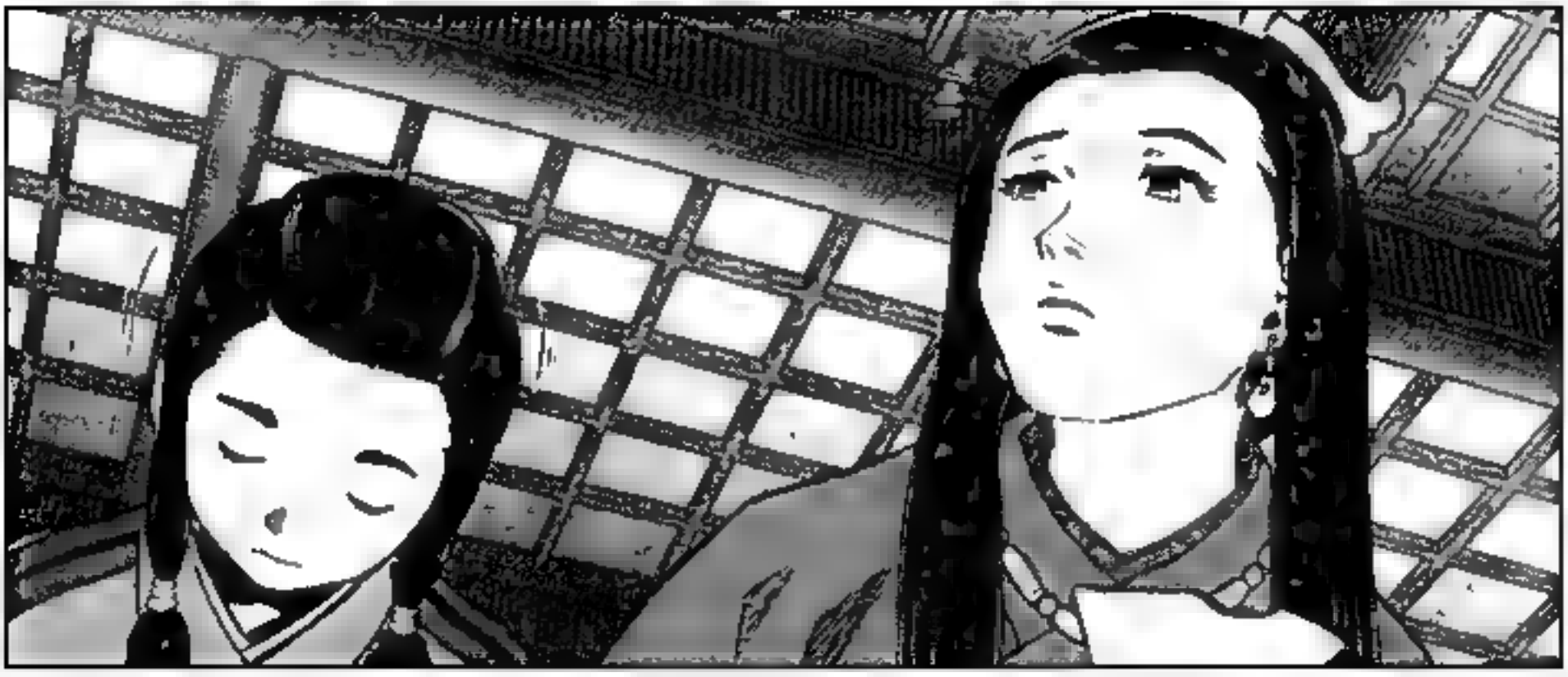
CRAP...

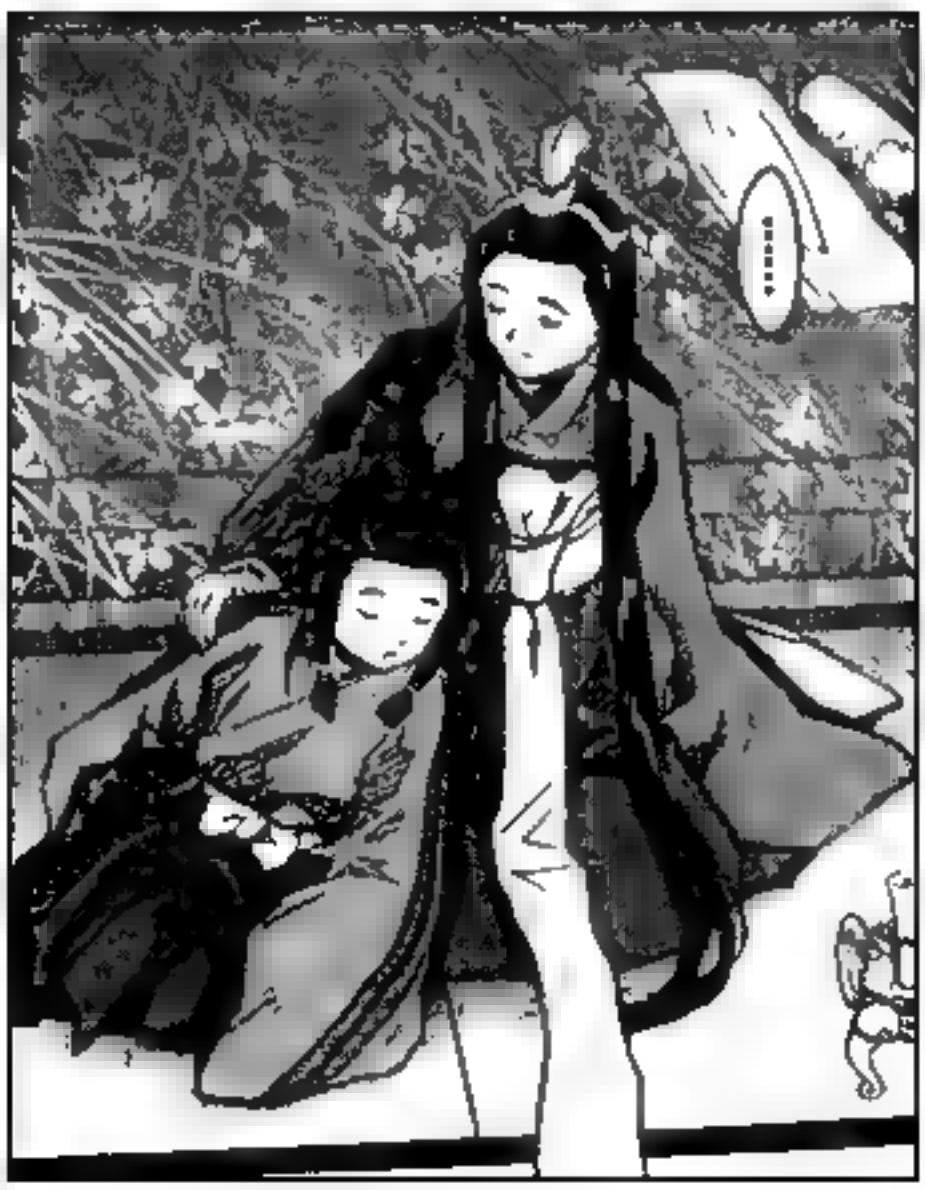
IF I FAIL, I PAY WITH MY OWN LIFE.

SIMPLY PUT, THAT IS INDEED THE CASE... BUT SUCCESS IS NOT GUARANTEED...

WHY DO YOU RISK YOUR LIFE TO EARN MONEY THROUGH SUCH WORK?

SFX: CHIRA (GLANCE)





MOST LIKELY, THE EMPRESS WANTS ME TO BE THE PRINCE'S BODYGUARD... HERE IN THE NEW YOGO EMPIRE, THE EMPEROR WEDS THREE EMPRESSES. THE EMPRESS WHO FIRST GIVES BIRTH TO A PRINCE BECOMES THE FIRST EMPRESS.

BALSA..

BUT I MUST MAKE HER UNDERSTAND THAT IT'S ALL A DELUSION, A MISUNDERSTANDING...

I HAVE NO IDEA HOW AND JUST WHAT THE EMPRESS HEARD...

AND THE EMPRESS WHO GIVES BIRTH TO THE SECOND PRINCE BECOMES THE SECOND EMPRESS...

RIGHT NOW, THE EMPIRE ONLY HAS TWO PRINCES.

THE THIRD EMPRESS HAS YET TO BEAR A PRINCE...

THERE PROBABLY IS SOMETHING SUSPICIOUS GOING ON IN THE PALACE DUE TO SUCCESSION ISSUES OR SOME SUCH...

!!!

BECAUSE OF YOUR SKILLS, I HAVE A REQUEST TO MAKE. I CAME HERE TONIGHT PREPARED TO PART WITH THIS CHILD FOREVER.

I BEG OF YOU!! I DO NOT CARE WHERE YOU CHOOSE TO FLEE,

BUT PLEASE PROTECT THIS CHILD FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE FROM HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY'S ASSASSINS!!

THE EMPEROR'S ASSASSINS?!

TWO WEEKS AGO, HE ALSO NEARLY LOST HIS LIFE WHEN BOILING HOT WATER SUDDENLY ERUPTED IN THE BATHS AT THE MOUNTAIN VILLA.

... YOU SAW THE OXCART FALL TODAY...

THAT IS WHAT THEY ALL SAY AT FIRST... BUT THAT'S BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW WHY THIS CHILD'S LIFE IS IN DANGER.

BUT WHY WOULD THE EMPEROR WISH THE PRINCE DEAD?! WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, PERHAPS THE REPEATED ACCIDENTS WERE JUST A COINCI-DENCE...

ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO WHEN WE WERE IN THE MOUNTAIN VILLA. .

NO!!

THEN, AS I SUSPECTED, THERE IS A SUCCESSION ISSUE OR SOME OTHER--

IT BEGAN ...

THE CHILD BEGAN TO HAVE NIGHTMARES EVERY NIGHT...

AND ALWAYS THE SAME NIGHTMARE...

AS DAYS WENT BY, THE DREAM BECAME MORE THAN A DREAM... HE EVEN BEGAN SLEEPWALKING...

SO MANY DAYS PASSED THUS... THAT I ASKED AN INDIVIDUAL OF CERTAIN TRAINING TO INVESTIGATE.

HE SAID THAT SOMETHING MYSTERIOUS HAD POSSESSED THE CHILD...

WHAT?!

HE SAID THAT THE CHILD IS POSSESSED BY A BEING NOT OF THIS WORLD...

THE SECOND EMPRESS' CRY OF GRIEF... WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE PRINCE?!

TMI-SCANS PRESENTS
SEIREI NO MORIBITO
GUARDIAN OF THE SACRED SPIRIT
BY: FUJIWARA KAMUI

CLEANERS:

VATO LOCO!
ALLASHANDRA
CHARMED BUTTERCUP
AMATERASU
ELITELINK
CHIRESAKURA

TRANSLATOR:
RUNPSICAT

PROOFREADER:
BELLE STARLIA

A SPECIAL THANK YOU GOES OUT ANIME-KRAZE FANSUBS AT
WWW.ANIME-KRAZE.ORG
TMI'S HOME ON THE WEB IS AT WWW.FMAHQ.COM

CHAPTER 2: SUDDEN DEPARTURE

POSSESSED BY A BEING NOT OF THIS WORLD?

I BELIEVE THEY ARE HEIRS OF THE "WAY OF HEAVEN", THE REASON OF HEAVEN MADE MANIFEST. THEY DIVINE THE STARS, KNOW OF DISTANT EVENTS AS THOUGH THEY WERE PRESENT, AND FORE-TELL THE FUTURE.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT STAR DIVIN-ERS ARE?

YES...

HEARING OF THIS CHILD'S CONDITION, THE EMPEROR SENT A STAR DIVINER CALLED GAKAI TO OBSERVE THE CHILD IN HIS SLEEP.

I CAN'T... MOVE...

i

FZZIT = LIGHT DISAPPEARS

HA HA HA

FZZIT

HOW DARE YOU!

WHAT IS GOING ON?! IS IT TRULY A PRINCE OF THE EMPIRE WHO LIES THERE?!

"SUCH A THING"...? WHAT WAS IT?!

NO TRUE SON OF THE EMPIRE WOULD BE POSSESSED BY SUCH A THING!

THE SLEEPER WILL DIE NOT SO FAR IN THE FUTURE FROM NOW.

YOU FORETELL THE PRINCE'S DEATH?!

!!

THEREFORE, I AM NOT FORETELLING THE DEATH OF A PRINCE!

A TRUE PRINCE WOULD NOT DIE A TRUE PRINCE WOULD NEVER BE POSSESSED BY SUCH A THING!

DROP

SOB
SOB
SOB

WHY WOULD SUCH A DISASTER BEFALL THIS CHILD...

MOTHER ...

YOU! DID YOU INSULT MOTHER?!

!

NO, CHAGUM.. I WAS ASKING THIS WOMAN TO SAVE YOUR LIFE.

WAIT, PLEASE!

!!

CEASE TO BE A PRINCE?

PLEASE... LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY TILL THE END.

CHAGUM, YOU TOO... AFTER TONIGHT, YOU WILL CEASE TO BE A PRINCE...

!!

AND ORDERED THE SECRET ASSASSINATION OF THIS CHILD.

HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY PROBABLY HEARD OF THIS MATTER FROM THE STAR DIVINER, GAKAI...

WHY WOULD AN EMPEROR GIVE SUCH AN ORDER WITHOUT EVEN ATTEMPTING TO SAVE HIS OWN CHILD?

FATHER... FATHER DID...?!

THE POSSESSION OF A PRINCE WOULD DAMAGE HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY'S PRESTIGE AS THE SON OF HEAVEN, AND THE EMPIRE'S PRESTIGE BY EXTENSION.

I DON'T UNDER-STAND.... I DON'T UNDER-STAND!!

CHAGUM.. RULING THIS EMPIRE IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE TO HIS MAJESTY. YOU UNDERSTAND THAT, DON'T YOU?

UNFORTUNATELY... I AM UNABLE TO AS WELL.

OF COURSE, I DID NOT DISCLOSE THE PRINCE'S IDENTITY AND PHRASED THE TURN OF EVENTS AS A RIDDLE.

GIVEN THAT THE MATTER SEEMED BEYOND A STAR DIVINER, I SECRETLY SENT A MESSAGE TO A SHAMAN HELD IN HIGH ESTEEM IN THE CAPITAL...

... I DID NOT ACCEPT THAT WILLINGLY, EITHER.

I'M SURPRISED YOU MANAGED TO GET IN TOUCH WITH HER!

!

WHAT IS THE SHAMAN'S NAME?

TOROGAI.

YOU KNOW MANY THINGS... ARE THE SHAMAN'S POWERS CERTAIN?

SHE WANDERS LIKE THE WIND ITSELF, SO IT IS HARD TO GET A HOLD OF HER...

!

AS FAR AS I KNOW, HER POWERS ARE GREAT!

IN ANY CASE, SHAMAN TOROGAI'S RESPONSE WENT LIKE THIS:

THAT WAS ALL.

I CANNOT SAY WHAT THAT "THING" IS WITH ANY CERTAINTY. HOWEVER, SHOULD IT BE WHAT WAS CONSIDERED LONG EXTINCT SINCE ANTIQUITY, THE POSSESSED WILL DIE WHEN HE FAILS TO PROTECT IT. IF HE CAN PROTECT IT UNTIL THE SUMMER SOLSTICE, HE SHOULD SURVIVE.

I COULD ONLY CLING TO THE ONE HOPE OFFERED IN HER MESSAGE...

TOROGAI DEPARTED FROM THE CAPITAL AFTER SENDING THAT MESSAGE AND IS NOW MISSING...

EVEN IF HE CANNOT LIVE AS ONE OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY...

I WOULD LIKE THIS CHILD TO LIVE, NO MATTER WHAT...

AND... THE ONLY OPPORTUNITY OPEN TO ME IS THE ONE I HAVE RIGHT NOW.

IF HE LIVES, HE CAN AT LEAST KNOW THE JOYS OF LIFE.

PLEASE TAKE THIS AND PROTECT HIM.

I PREPARED A REWARD THAT NO COMMONER CAN POSSIBLY SPEND IN HIS ENTIRE LIFETIME...

JANGLE

THUD

BALSA.. YOU ARE STRONG!

I UNDERSTAND WHERE YOU ARE COMING FROM... HOWEVER, PERMIT ME THIS DISCOURTESY TO SAY THIS:

WHAT YOU HAVE DONE IS UTTERLY UNFAIR TO ME!

"UNFAIR"...? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!

!

WHETHER I REFUSE AND DIE OR ACCEPT AND CONTINUALLY RISK DEATH, BOTH PATHS LEAD TO CERTAIN DEATH...

ANYONE OF MY LOW STATION TOLD OF SUCH MATTERS WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ACQUIESCE TO YOUR REQUEST, YOUR MAJESTY.

I AM INDEED UNFAIR...

I SEE...

WILL YOU DIE HERE NOW OR TAKE THE TREASURE AND GAMBLE ON SURVIVAL?

BALSA, YOU ARE CORRECT IN THAT I CANNOT LET YOU GO NOW THAT YOU KNOW OF THIS SECRET.

TWO BEHIND ME... TWO IN THE OUTSIDE CORRIDOR... THREE BEHIND YOU...

CHOOSE,

BALSA THE SPEAR-WIELDER!!

IT SEEMS YOU HAVE SURPRISINGLY FEW RETAIN-ERS YOU CAN TRUST.

SFX: SWIFT MOVEMENT

CLACK

SWING

DON'T MAKE A MOVE!!!

IF ANYONE MOVES, THIS SPEAR WILL PIERCE THE PRINCE!

.....

!?

I'LL BE TAKING THE TREASURE AND THE PRINCE.

I HAVE GONE A LITTLE TOO FAR. I JUST WANTED TO LET OFF SOME STEAM!

I ACCEPT I WILL PROTECT HIM, EVEN IF IT WILL COST ME MY LIFE!
WHY WOULD I CHOOSE DEATH?

SMILE

BALSA, I HAVE FAITH IN YOU!!

I HAVE FAITH IN YOU...

GO, CHAGUM! TRUST IN HER AS I DO!

IF YOU WANT THE PRINCE TO ESCAPE, SET FIRE TO HIS SLEEPING CHAMBER!

CHAMBER-LAIN! ARE YOU THERE?!

THEN LEAD US TO A SAFE ESCAPE ROUTE!

WE WILL MAKE IT SEEM AS THOUGH THE PRINCE IS DEAD... ALTHOUGH I'M SURE THEY'LL KNOW THE TRUTH BEFORE LONG.

JANGLE

I WILL TAKE JUST THE GEMSTONES. USING GOLD COIN STAMPED WITH THE IMPERIAL SEAL WILL ONLY HASTEN OUR DISCOVERY.

HOW LONG IT TAKES THEM WILL DECIDE WHETHER WE LIVE OR DIE...

THE PREPA-RATIONS ARE COMPLETE.

FAREWELL, YOUR MAJESTY!!

GRAB

BALSA!!

OF THE PRINCE...

PLEASE TAKE GOOD CARE...

...

I BELIEVE I AM WELL AWARE OF THE WEIGHT OF THOSE WORDS, YOUR MAJESTY.

FROM NOW ON, YOU ARE JUST CHAGUM.

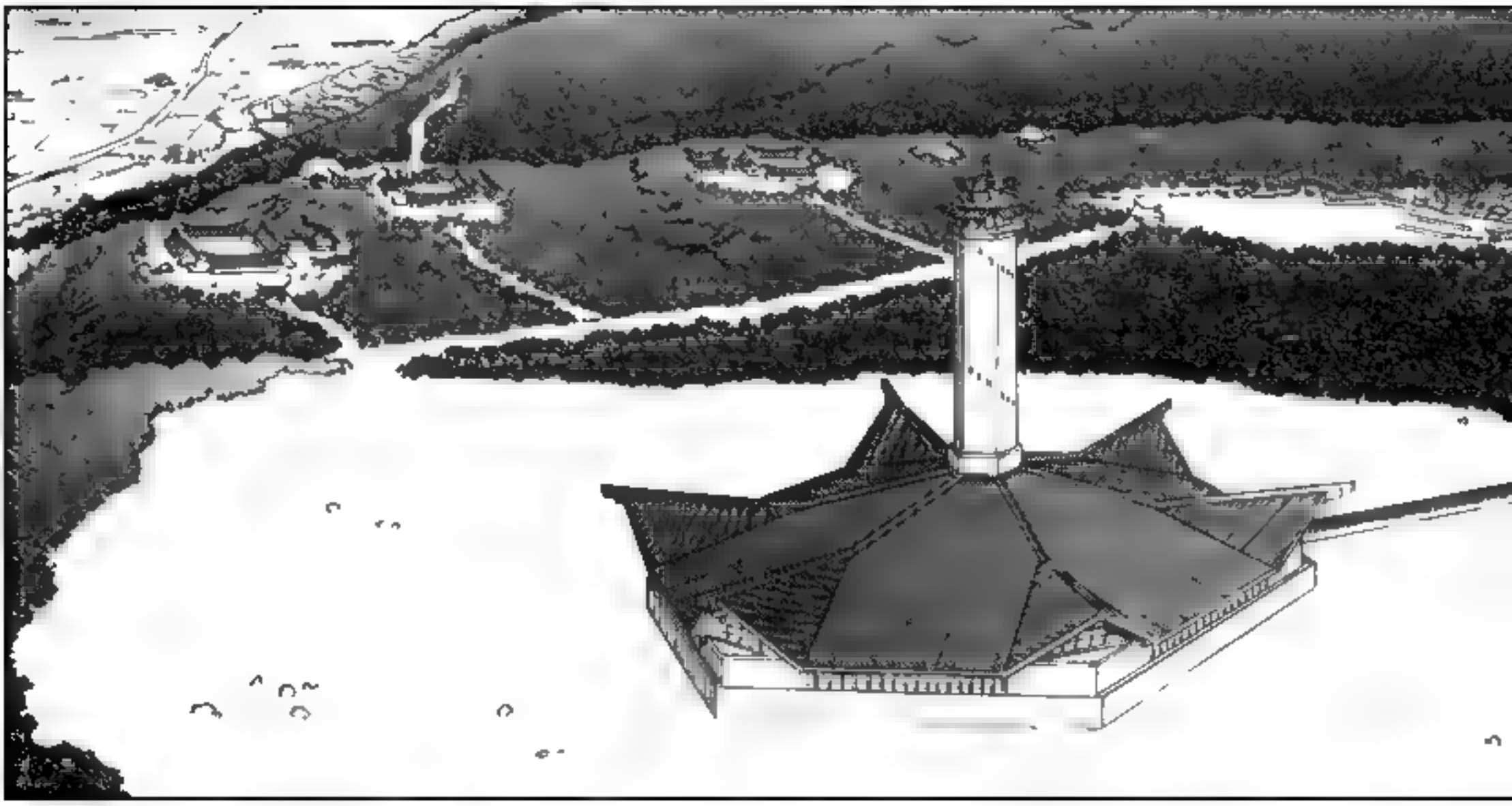
THE PRINCE YOU WERE DIED IN THAT FIRE...

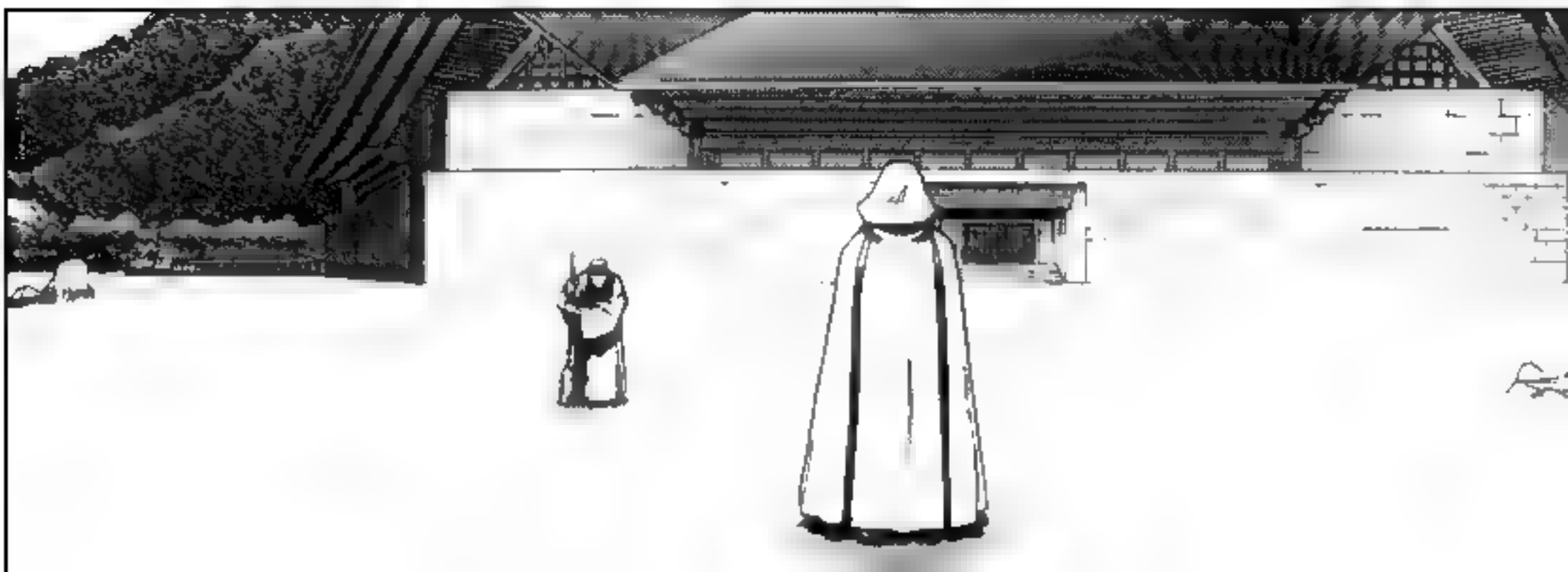
IT WILL BE HARD ON YOU, BUT YOU MUST BEAR IT AND SURVIVE. IF YOU DO, YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO SEE YOUR MOTHER AGAIN SOME-DAY...

IS THAT UNDER-STOOD...?

THAT'S WHY I PLEADED TO LET ME HANDLE IT... IT WASN'T SOMETHING A MAN LIKE GAKAI COULD HANDLE. LOOK... THE SITUATION ONLY GETS WORSE AND WORSE...

THAT THING COULD NOT HAVE CAUSED A FIRE... ITS NATURE SHOULD BE THAT OF WATER...





HIS HOLINESS ISN'T IN MEDITATION.

WHITE CLOTH.. GOOD...

SLIDE

GAKAI...

WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS WITH HIS HOLINESS? IF IT'S ABOUT THE SECOND PALACE, I JUST GAVE HIM A DETAILED REPORT.

IS THAT SO...

STILL, YOUR GARMENTS REEK OF SMOKE.

NO... I HAVE SOMETHING FROM YESTERDAY'S STAR DIVINATION I WISH TO REPORT TO HIS HOLINESS.

IS THAT YOU, SHUGA...?

YES, YOUR HOLINESS! IT IS I, SHUGA.

THAT IS BECAUSE I HAVE GONE TO SEE THE BURNED RUINS OF THE SECOND PALACE.

HMPH

YES, YOUR HOLINESS

ENTER. IT IS WELL THAT YOU CAME AT THIS TIME; I HAVE SOMETHING I WISH TO DISCUSS WITH YOU...

ARE YOU HERE RE-GARDING THE SECOND PALACE?

IT SEEMS LAST NIGHT ONE WAS A BUSY ONE.

I ALSO... WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?

EARLIER, GAKAI WAS REJOICING, SAYING THE PRINCE HAS DIED IN THE FIRE AND THERE WAS NO LONGER ANYTHING TO WORRY ABOUT ..

THEN WE SHARE THE SAME PUR-POSE.

FORGIVE ME, YOUR HOLI-NESS, BUT I DISAGREE...

WHEN I FIRST HEARD OF THE PRINCE'S CONDITION, I RECALLED TWO THINGS:

FIRST, THE WATER DEMON SAID TO HAVE BEEN DEFEATED BY THE HOLY FOUNDING FATHER, EMPEROR TORGAL, IN THE OFFICIAL FOUNDING HISTORY...

SECOND, THE DROUGHT SIGN THAT HAS BEGUN TO APPEAR IN THE HEAVENS SINCE AROUND SUMMER SOLSTICE-TIME LAST YEAR...

I WONDERED WHAT THE CONNECTION WAS, SO I READ ALL THE ANCIENT BOOKS I HAD AT MY DISPOSAL.

I THEN FOUND SOMETHING QUITE CURIOUS...

IN ADDITION, I FOUND A DISTURBING RECORD DATING BACK-A HUNDRED YEARS THAT A DEMON APPEARED AND DEVOURED OR RIPPED APART A CHILD...

THIS PENINSULA HAS BEEN BESET BY A MAJOR DROUGHT APPROXIMATELY EVERY HUNDRED YEARS MANY TIMES IN THE PAST.

HMM.. IT IS EVEN MENTIONED IN THE OFFICIAL FOUNDING HISTORY THAT THE YAKUE TELL OF A DEMON THAT APPEARS ONCE EVERY HUNDRED YEARS AND DEVOURS A CHILD'S SOUL...

THIS RECORD IS TOO SIMILAR TO THE WATER DEMON'S TALE IN THE OFFI-CIAL FOUNDING HISTORY.

THIS YEAR IS THE VERY YEAR THAT COMES BUT EVERY HUNDRED YEARS... I CANNOT BELIEVE THIS TO BE A MERE COINCI-DENCE!

IT IS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT THIS FIRE WAS CAUSED BY A DEMON... IT CLEARLY DEVIATES FROM THE DISASTERS THAT HAVE BEFALLEN THE PRINCE THUS FAR.

IF MY SPECULATIONS ARE CORRECT, THE NATURE OF THE DEMON POSSESSING THE PRINCE IS THAT OF WATER!!

I SHOULD HAVE ENTRUSTED THE TASK TO YOU WHEN YOU FIRST MADE THE REQUEST...

HM.. IT APPEARS I DID CHOOSE WRONGLY.

THOUGH GAKAI IS YOUR SENIOR, IT APPEARS THE BURDEN WAS TOO GREAT FOR HIM.

VERY WELL... YOU'RE STILL TOO YOUNG, BEING ONLY 20, BUT IT SEEMS YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN BECOME MY RIGHT HAND MAN.

.....

NOD

YES ..

ONCE YOU BECOME INVOLVED WITH THE DARKER SIDE OF POLITICS, YOU WILL START UPON A PATH FROM WHICH THERE IS NO RETURN.. DO YOU STILL WISH IT?

IF YOU BECOME INVOLVED... YOU WILL SEE AND MUST ACCEPT THE DARKER SIDE OF THIS STAR PALACE...

I WILL SAY ONE MORE THING...

HM ...

I HAVE BEEN TAUGHT THAT THE WORLD IS COMPRISED OF BOTH LIGHT AND DARK...

I WILL ENCOUNTER BOTH SOONER OR LATER AS A STAR DIVINER. NO MATTER HOW DARK AND TWISTED THE PATH MAY BE, IF IT LEADS TO THE HEAVENS... I INTEND TO WALK IT.

VERY WELL...

.....

THAT THOUGHT WILL BE THE ONLY LIGHT TO SHINE UPON YOUR PATH.

THERE IS NOW NO ONE ELSE HERE!

SFX: SWIFT MOVEMENT

WELL THEN, SHUGA..

ONE DOES NOT NEED TO BE A STAR DIVINER TO IMAGINE THE CONSE-QUENCES...

THE HOLY FOUNDING FATHER PURIFIED THIS LAND BY DEFEATING THE WATER DEMON... SHOULD IT BECOME KNOWN TO THE PEOPLE THAT THE CHILD OF HIS DESCENDANT, THE EMPEROR, HAS BECOME POSSESSED BY A WATER DEMON...

THE FIRST ATTEMPT WAS MADE AT THE HOT SPRINGS, THE SECOND AT AOYUMI RIVER YESTERDAY. BOTH WERE TO APPEAR AS ACCIDENTS, BUT FAILED...

THAT IS WHY HIS MAJESTY ORDERED THE SECOND PRINCE'S ASSASSINATION.

!!

YES... I PLANNED THOSE ATTEMPTS.

WATER.. BOTH INVOLVED WATER!!

AND WE NOW KNOW THAT WATER IS INVOLVED...

I THOUGHT THAT IF THE PRINCE'S LIFE WAS ENDANGERED, THE THING POSSESSING HIM WILL SHOW ITS TRUE NATURE.

I HAD THOUGHT OF USING FIRE AFTER WATER FAILED... BUT TOO MANY ATTEMPTS SO SOON WOULD RAISE SUSPICION. I AM NOT THAT FOOLISH..

HA HA...

THEN LAST NIGHT'S FIRE WAS...!

I HEARD IT WAS HER OWN DECISION TO SEND A MESSAGE TO SHAMAN TOROGAI.

I SUSPECT THE SECOND EMPRESS HAD A HAND IN IT... SHE IS CLEVER IN HER OWN WAY.

SHE COULD HAVE JUST RECEIVED A REWARD, BUT THEY WENT THROUGH THE TROUBLE TO INVITE HER AND HAVE HER STAY THERE.

AND ONE MORE THING . I HAVE INTEL THAT THE FEMALE BODYGUARD WHO RESCUED THE PRINCE FROM THE RIVER HAD BEEN INVITED TO THE SECOND PALACE.

I SEE ..

SHE APPARENTLY DISAPPEARED UNNOTICED SOMETIME DURING THE COMMOTION RAISED BY THE FIRE

A WANDERER, BALSA THE SPEARWIELDER... SHE IS APPARENTLY FAMOUS FOR HER SKILLS I AM SURE SHE IS A FORMIDABLE WOMAN.

SO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE EMPRESS ENTRUSTED THE PRINCE TO HER...!

JUST WHO IS THIS FEMALE BODYGUARD?

HUNTERS?

I HAVE SENT HUNTERS AFTER TOROGAI, WHO RECEIVED THE EMPRESS' MESSAGE, AND INTEND TO DO THE SAME FOR BALSA.

SFX: MOVEMENT

3

!!

YOU WILL BECOME THE THIRD TO KNOW.

THEY ARE HUNTERS IN THE HIDDEN SERVICE OF THE EMPEROR. ONLY THE EMPEROR AND I KNOW WHO THEY ARE...

TMI-SCANS PRESENTS
SEIREI NO MORIBITO
GUARDIAN OF THE SACRED SPIRIT

BY: FUJIWARA KAMUI

CLEANERS:
VATO LOCO!
ALLASHANDRA
CHARMED BUTTERCUP

TRANSLATOR:
RUNPSICAT

TYPESETTER:
ALLASHANDRA

A SPECIAL THANK YOU GOES OUT ANIME-KRAZE FANSUBS AT
WWW.ANIME-KRAZE.ORG
TMI'S HOME ON THE WEB IS AT WWW.FMAHQ.COM

Seirei no Moribito

by Uehashi Nahoko, Futatsugi Saki, & Fujiwara Kamui

Chapter 3

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The End

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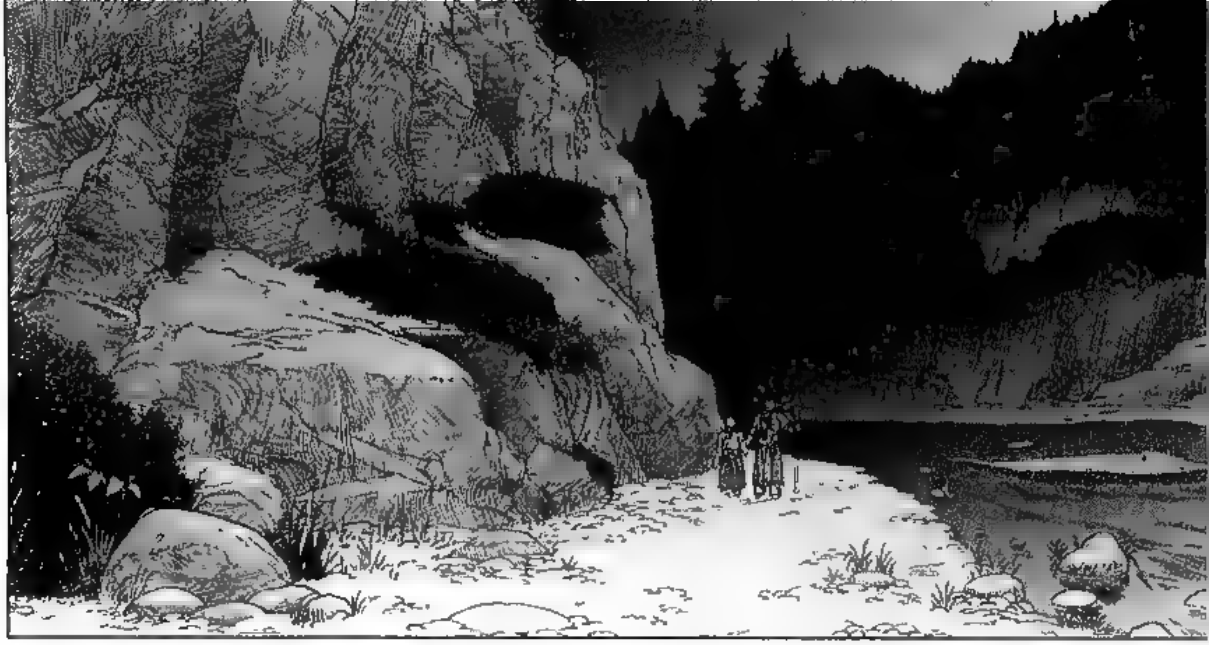
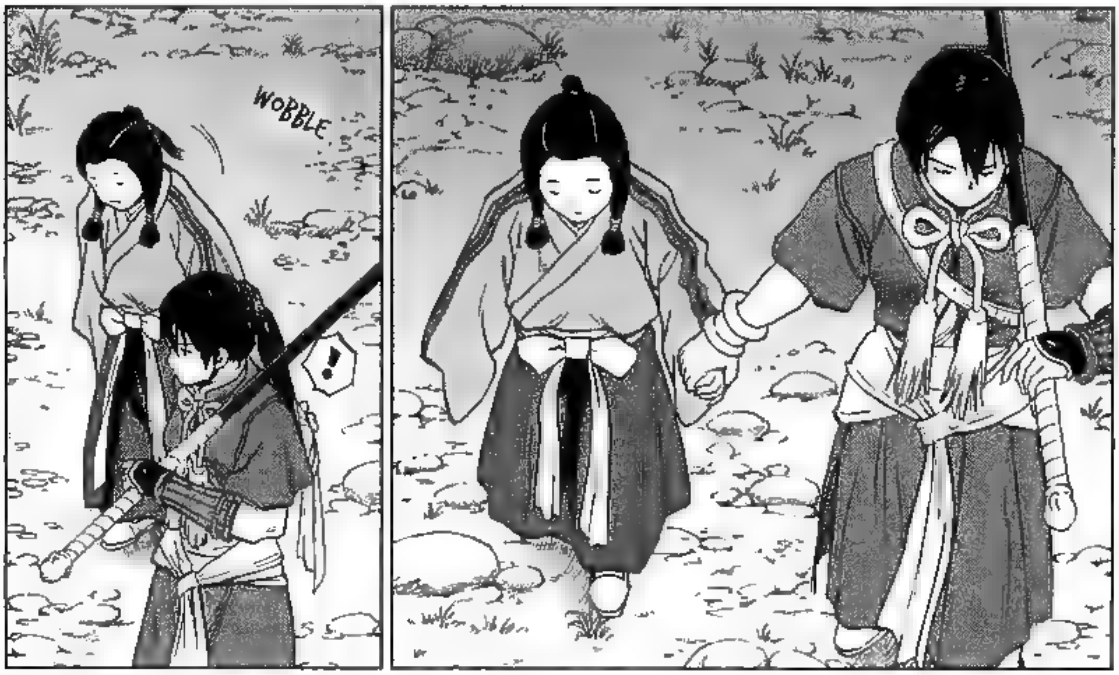
CHAPTER 3: AN APPROACHING DANGER




WOBBLE

WALKING HALF-ASLEEP, HUH...

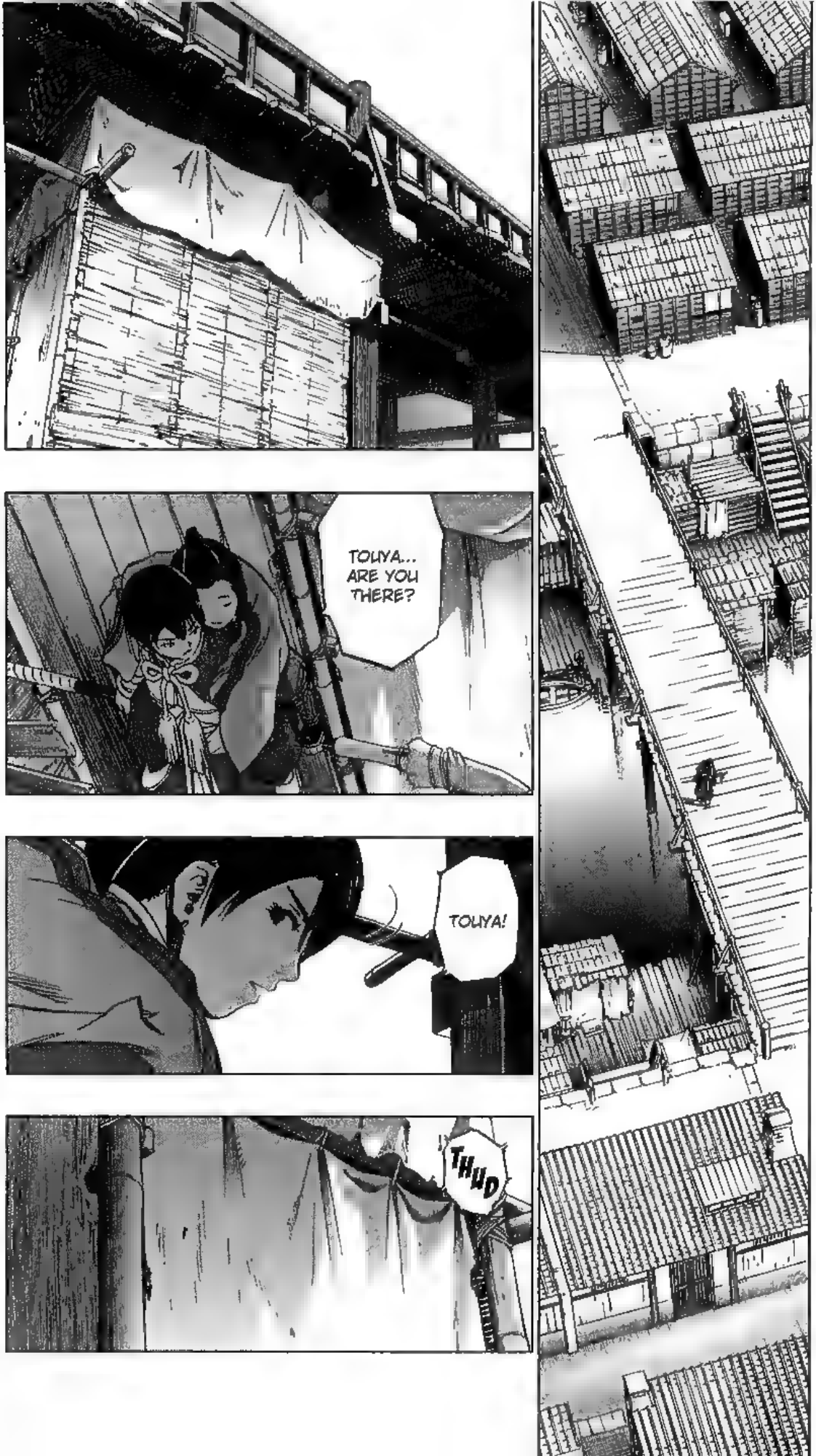
.....
COME ON, GO PIGGY-BACK.

WHAT IS PIGGY... BACK?
WHAT'S WRONG? HOP ON, QUICK.

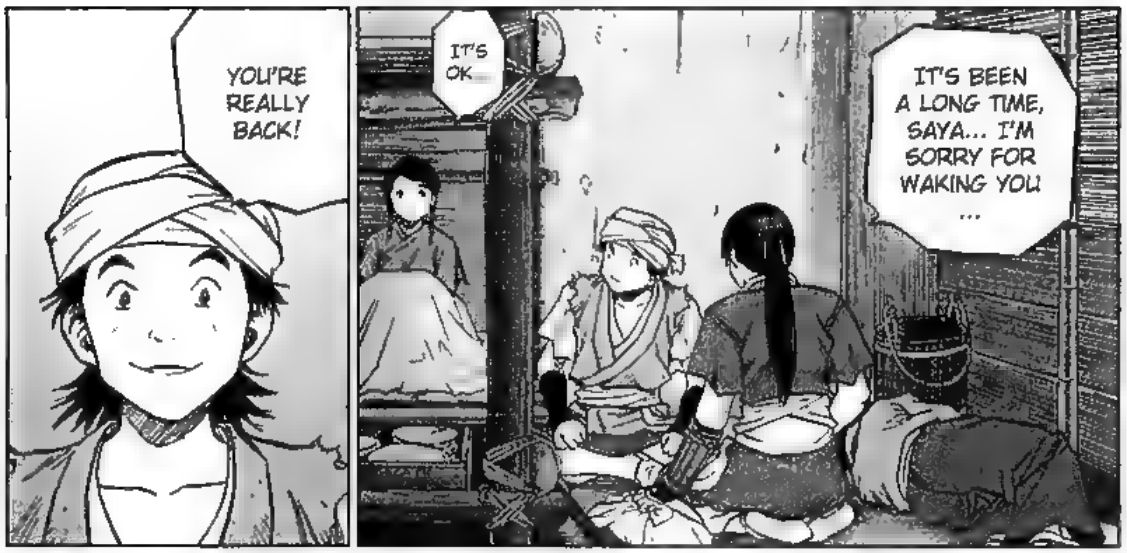
IT'S WARMER, ISN'T IT? NOW GO TO SLEEP.
THAT'S WHAT COMMONERS DO. MOTHERS CARRY THEIR CHILDREN ON THEIR BACK WHILE THEY WORK...

IT MEANS I'LL CARRY YOU ON MY BACK.

WHOOSH


TOUYA... ARE YOU THERE?
TOUYA!
THUD

WHO'S THERE? THIS EARLY IN THE MORN-ING...
AH... BALSA-NEESAN.
WHEN DID YA GET BACK?
CAN I COME IN? SOMETHING'S COME UP.
I DON'T WANT US TO BE SEEN...
OH, OF COURSE.
I'M SORRY ABOUT THIS.
BALSA-SAN...


YOU'RE REALLY BACK!
IT'S OK...
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, SAYA... I'M SORRY FOR WAKING YOU ...

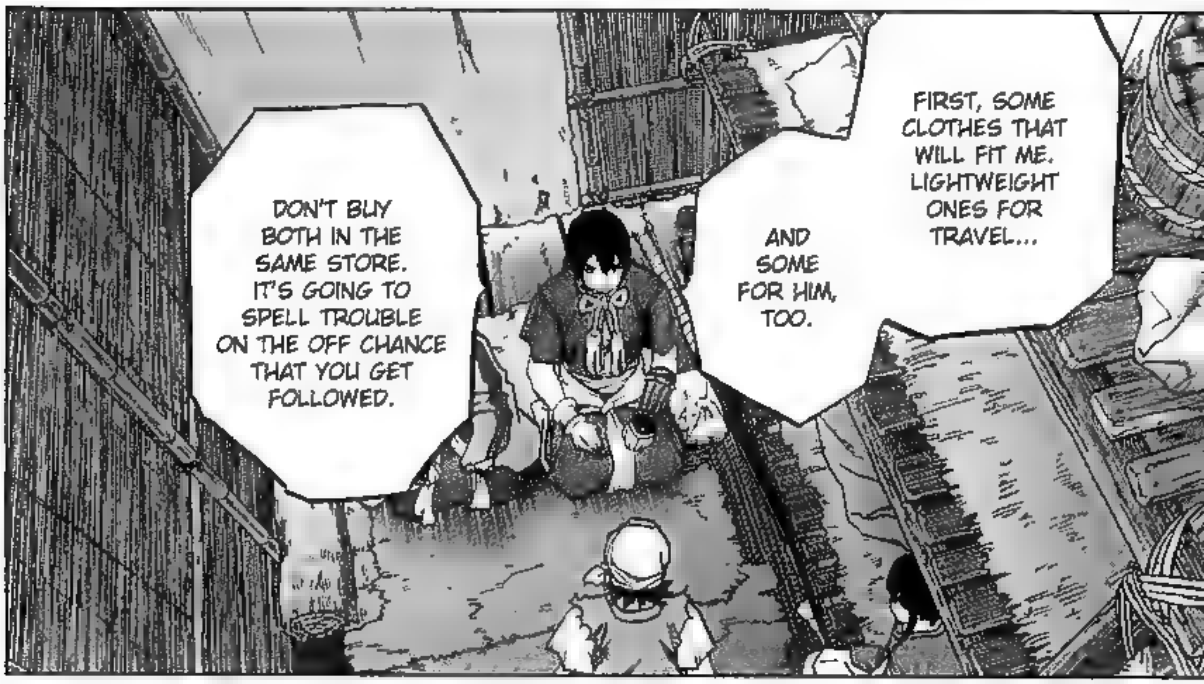
HEHE, IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU, BALSA-SAN!
IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS... YOU'VE REALLY GROWN, BOTH OF YOU...

WHERE ARE WE?
ARE YOU GETTING UP?

NAH...

I CAN'T GET INTO THE DETAILS... IT'S VERY COMPLICATED...
UM, BALSA-SAN... WHEN YOU SAID SOMETHING'S COME UP... DID YOU MEAN KIDNAPPING AN ARISTOCRAT'S SON?
I WAS JUST ASKED TO BE HIS BODYGUARD.
OF COURSE NOT!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT! I'LL GO THROUGH FIRE AND WATER IF YOU'RE THE ONE ASKING, BALSA-SAN!
I DON'T WANT TO CAUSE YOU TROUBLE, BUT IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH...
CLINK
THIS IS SUDDEN, BUT,

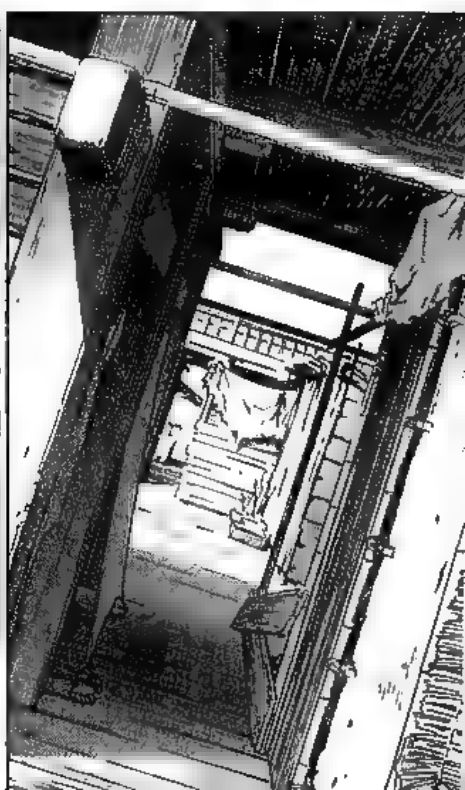
GULP
I WANT YOU TO DO SOME SHOPPING FOR ME WITH THIS.

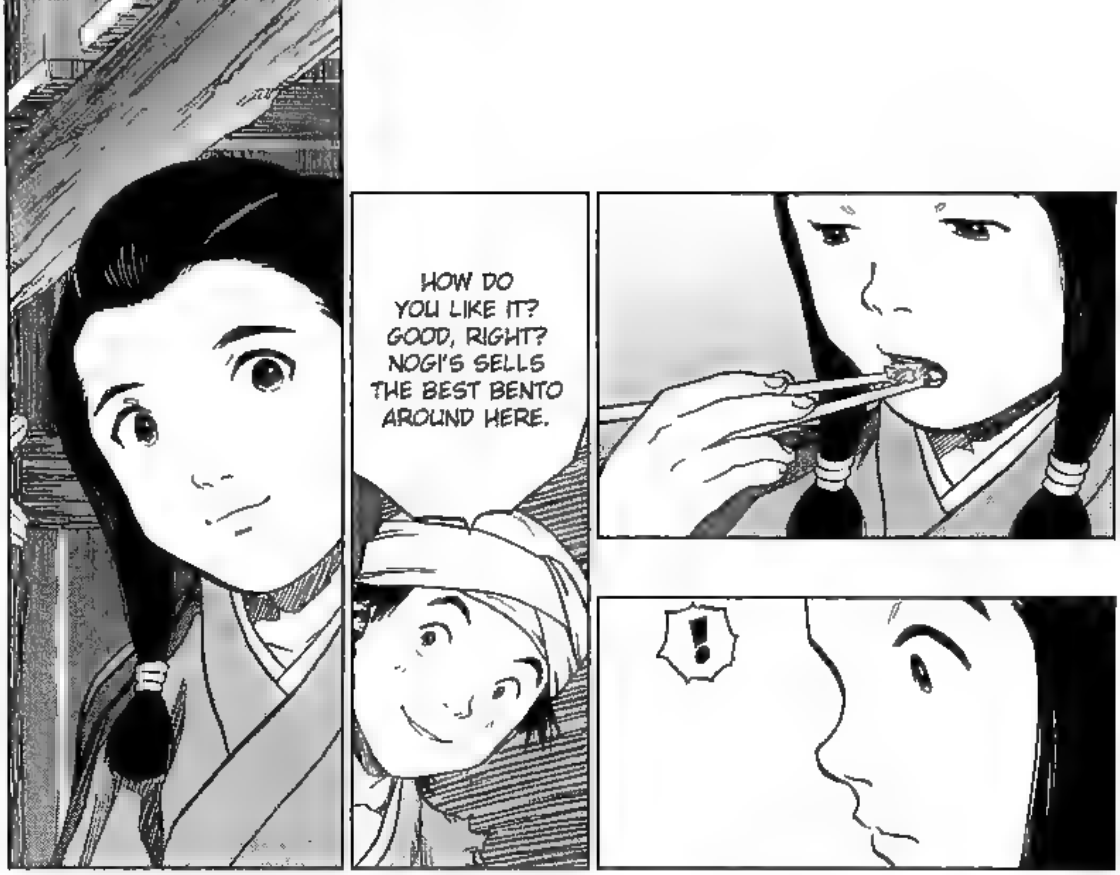

DON'T BUY BOTH IN THE SAME STORE. IT'S GOING TO SPELL TROUBLE ON THE OFF CHANCE THAT YOU GET FOLLOWED.
AND SOME FOR HIM, TOO.
FIRST, SOME CLOTHES THAT WILL FIT ME. LIGHTWEIGHT ONES FOR TRAVEL...

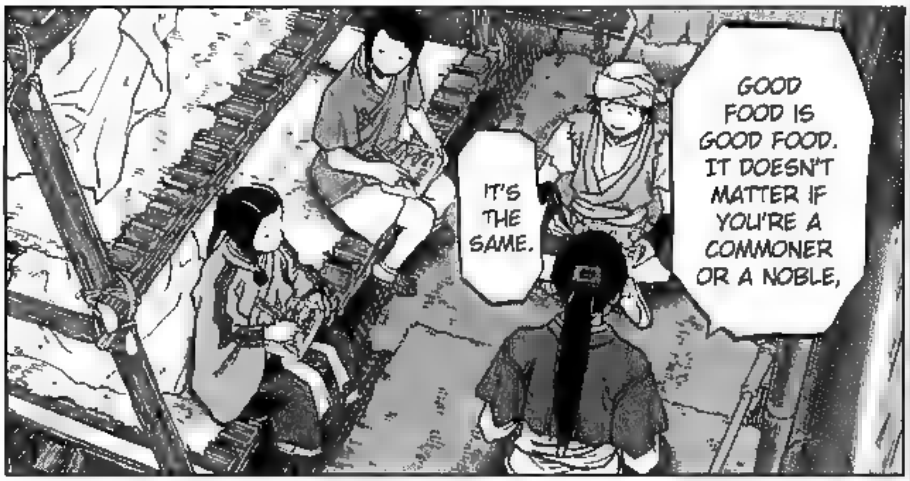
THEN 10 SHEETS OF OILED PAPER, A PIECE OF BEARSKIN, AND 10 DAYS WORTH OF DRIED RICE AND DRIED MEAT.....

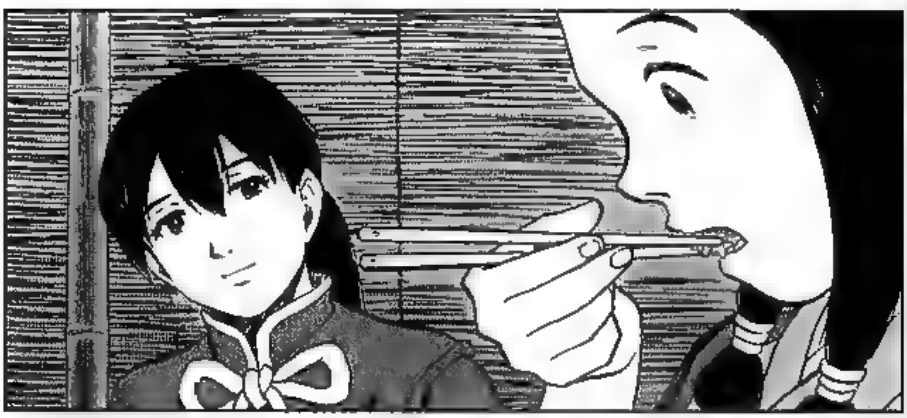
I'M GONNA NEED YOUR HELP TODAY TOO, SAYA.
NO PROBLEM! I'LL BE ON THE LOOKOUT TO MAKE SURE I'M NOT FOLLOWED.

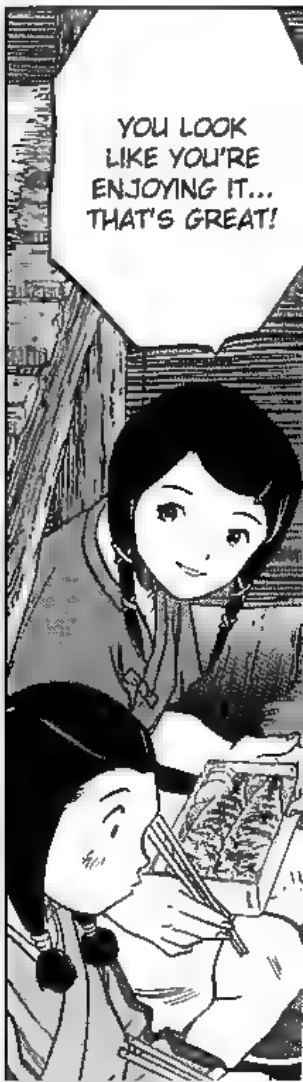
I CAN TELL YOU'RE HUNGRY, BALSA-SAN. THE KID TOO! I'LL JUST DROP BY NOGI'S SHOP FOR SOME FOOD.
BUT BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE, LET'S EAT!



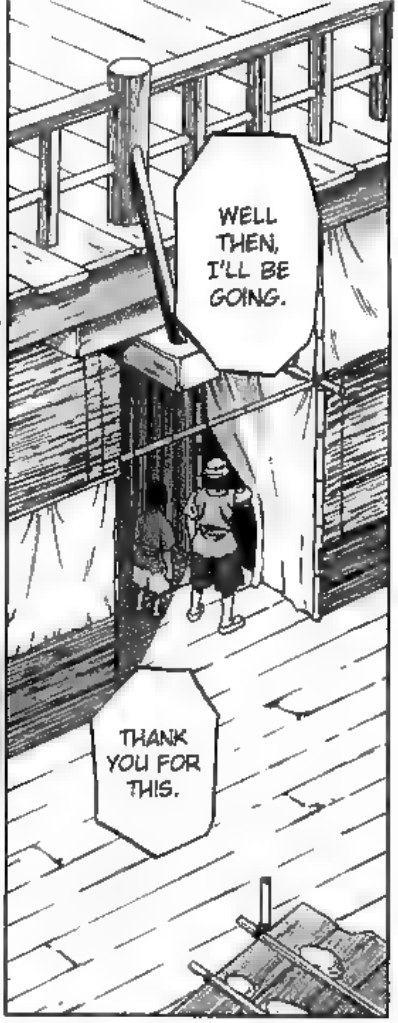

HOW DO YOU LIKE IT? GOOD, RIGHT? NOGI'S SELLS THE BEST BENTO AROUND HERE.
!

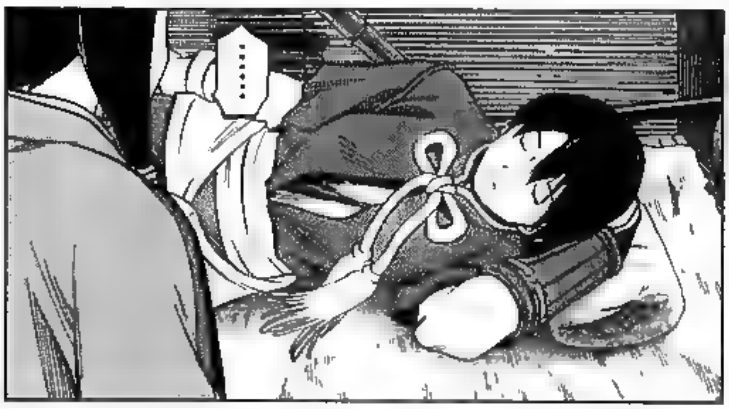

IT'S THE SAME.
GOOD FOOD IS GOOD FOOD. IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU'RE A COMMONER OR A NOBLE,



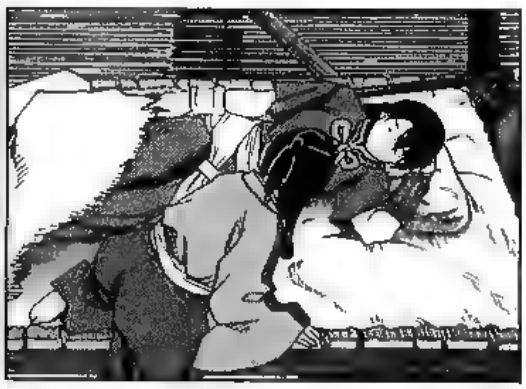

YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE ENJOYING IT... THAT'S GREAT!

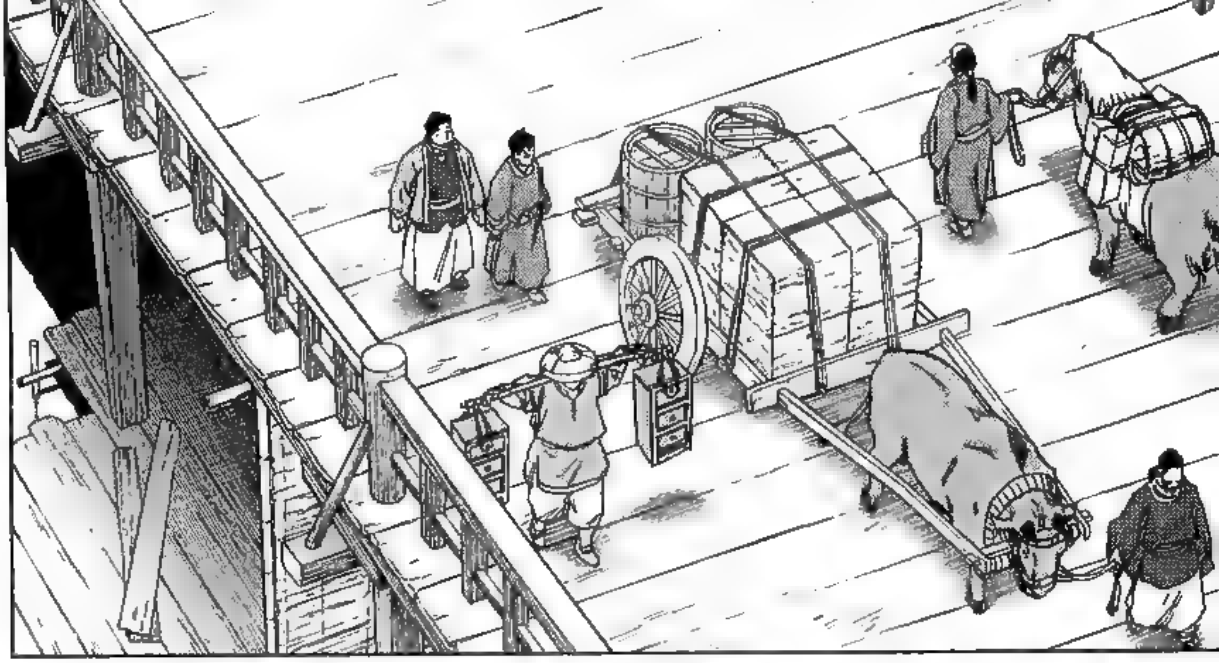
OKAY THEN, LET'S TAKE A QUICK NAP WHILE THEY'RE OUT.


WELL THEN, I'LL BE GOING.
THANK YOU FOR THIS.


.....

CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
RUMBLE
RUMBLE





RUMBLE
RUMBLE
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP

CLACK
CLACK
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE

FWIP

WHAT IS THIS... AND WHAT IS THAT SMELL...

CHAGUM!!
CHAGUM!!

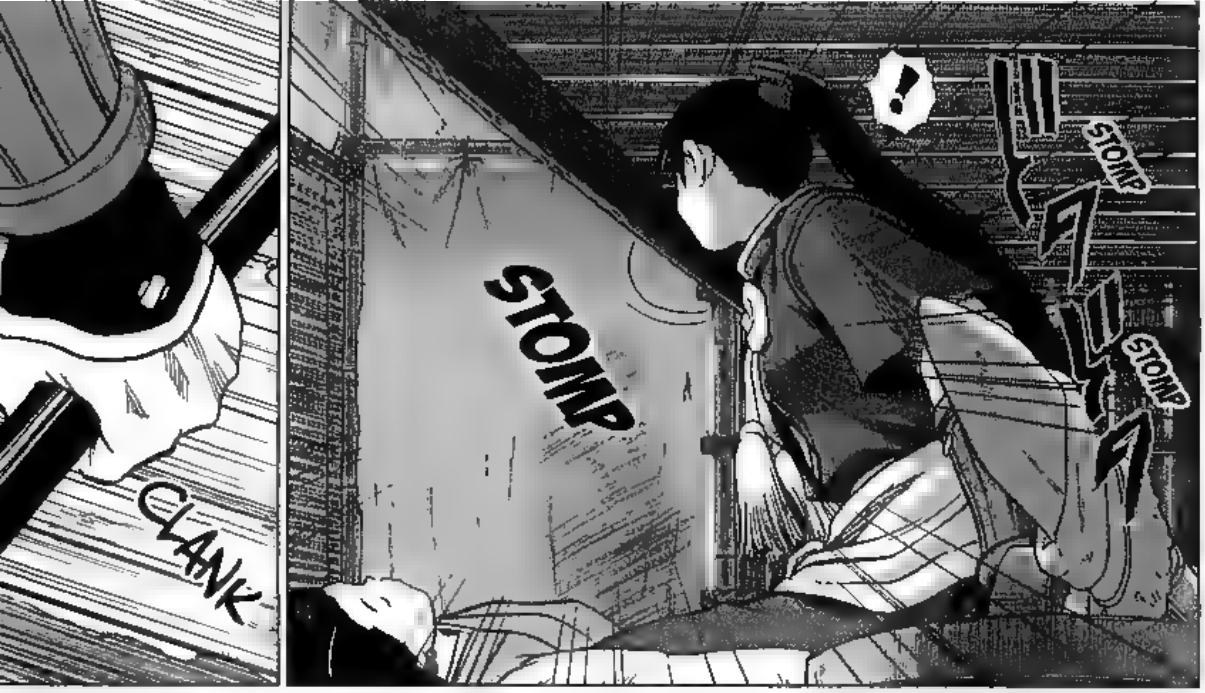
ARE YOU ALRIGHT?
AAAH...

I CAN'T REMEMBER... BUT I THINK IT WAS THE SAME DREAM I ALWAYS HAVE...
A DREAM? WHAT DID YOU SEE?
I HAD A DREAM...

WHEN I REALLY THINK ABOUT WANTING TO GO BACK...
THE SAME DREAM?

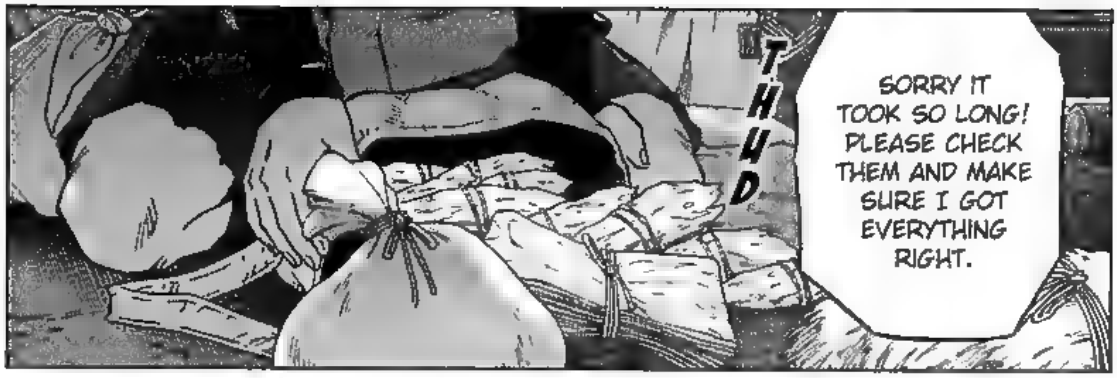
NO...
TO SOME COLD, BLUE PLACE...
GO BACK? YOU MEAN TO YOUR MOTHER?

BUT IT'S NOT JUST ANY WATER... IT'S... IT'S WATER FROM SOMEWHERE SPECIFIC...
!
RIGHT.. THAT SMELL JUST NOW WAS THE SMELL OF WATER. .

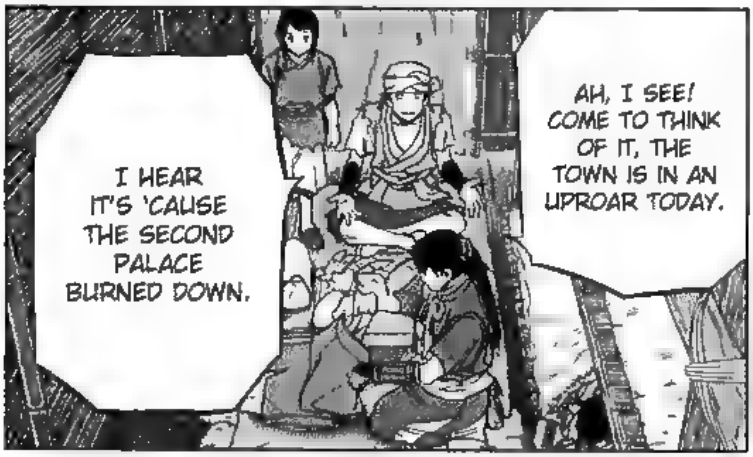

CLANK
STOMP
!
STOMP
STOMP

FLAP
WE'RE BACK!!

AH!


THUD
SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG! PLEASE CHECK THEM AND MAKE SURE I GOT EVERYTHING RIGHT.

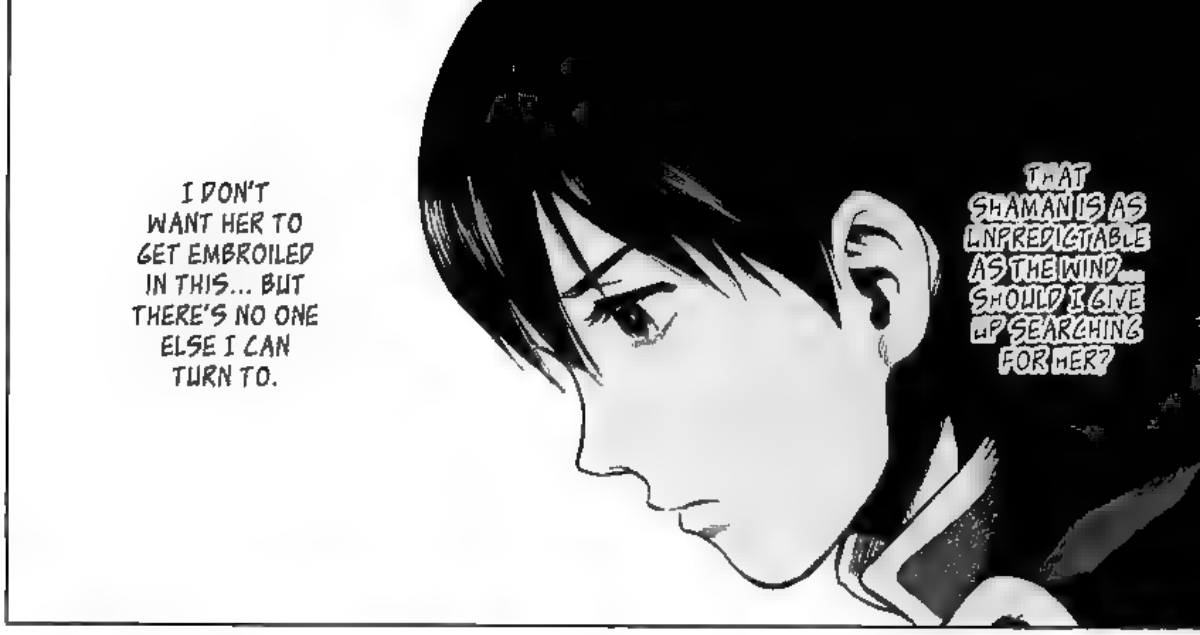
WHAT'S WRONG, BALSA-NEESAN? YOU LOOK PALE.
AH... SURE.


I HEAR IT'S 'CAUSE THE SECOND PALACE BURNED DOWN.
AH, I SEE! COME TO THINK OF IT, THE TOWN IS IN AN UPROAR TODAY.

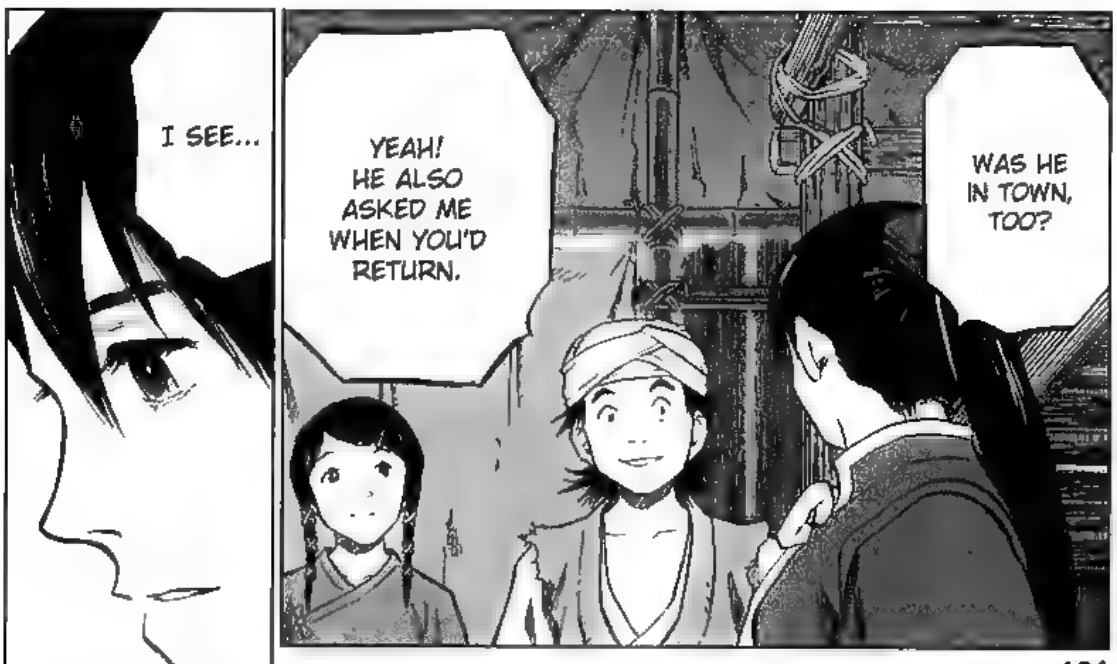
AH... NO, IT'S NOTHING. I THOUGHT YOU WERE THE PURSUERS...

NO, NOT REALLY.
DID YOU SEE ANY SOLDIERS OR BUREAU-CRATS WHO LOOKED LIKE THEY WERE SEARCHING FOR SOME-THING?

NOD
RIGHT, SAYA?
JUST TO BE SURE, I HAD SAYA BE ON THE LOOKOUT AT THE EMBANKMENT TO CHECK IF THERE WERE PEOPLE WATCHING OR FOLLOWING US. IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THERE'S ANYONE THERE.
I SEE. THANK YOU. YOUR QUICK THINKING IS A BIG HELP.
HMM..... I HEARD RUMORS A WHILE AGO THAT SHE WAS AROUND TOWN, BUT SINCE THEN I HAVEN'T HEARD ANY NEWS...
DO YOU KNOW WHERE TOROGAI IS, BY THE WAY?
I SEE... IT'S UNAVOIDABLE, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.


I DON'T WANT HER TO GET EMBROILED IN THIS... BUT THERE'S NO ONE ELSE I CAN TURN TO.
THAT SHAMAN IS AS UNPREDICTABLE AS THE WIND... SHOULD I GIVE UP SEARCHING FOR HER?

OH, I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT HIM...
!
BY THE WAY, TANDA-SAN WAS HERE RECENTLY, TOO!

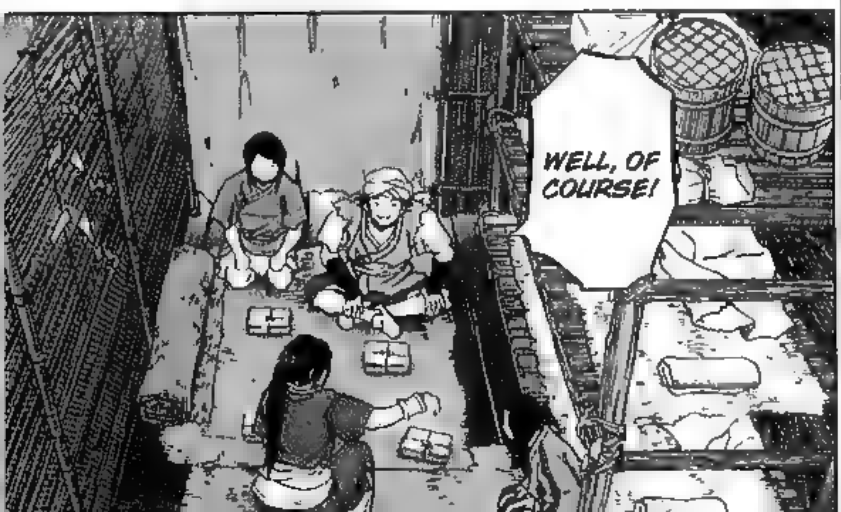

I SEE...
YEAH! HE ALSO ASKED ME WHEN YOU'D RETURN.
WAS HE IN TOWN, TOO?

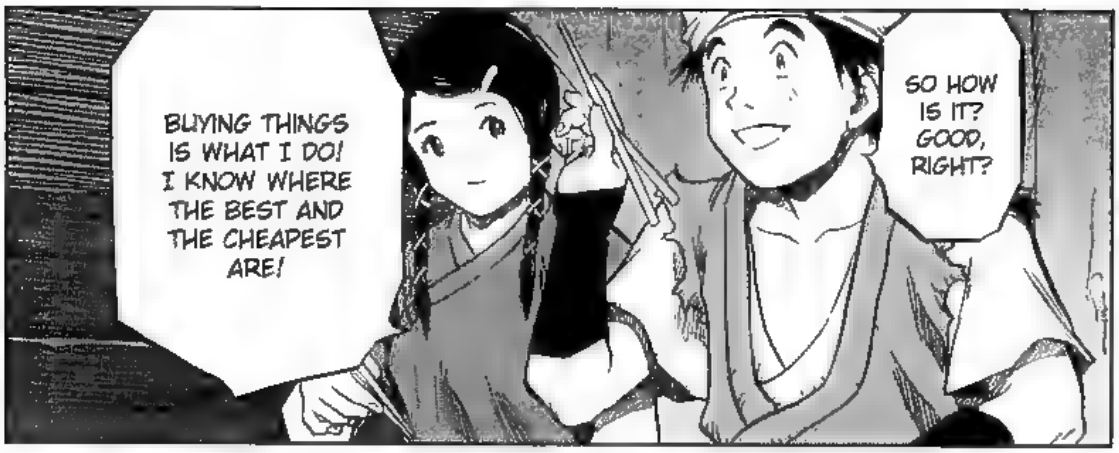
YEAH..... BUT HE'S WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
SO, IS TANDA DOING WELL...?

I SEE...

YEAH... IT'S WAY PAST LUNCHTIME... I'M HUNGRY EVEN THOUGH I DIDN'T EVEN DO ANYTHING TODAY.

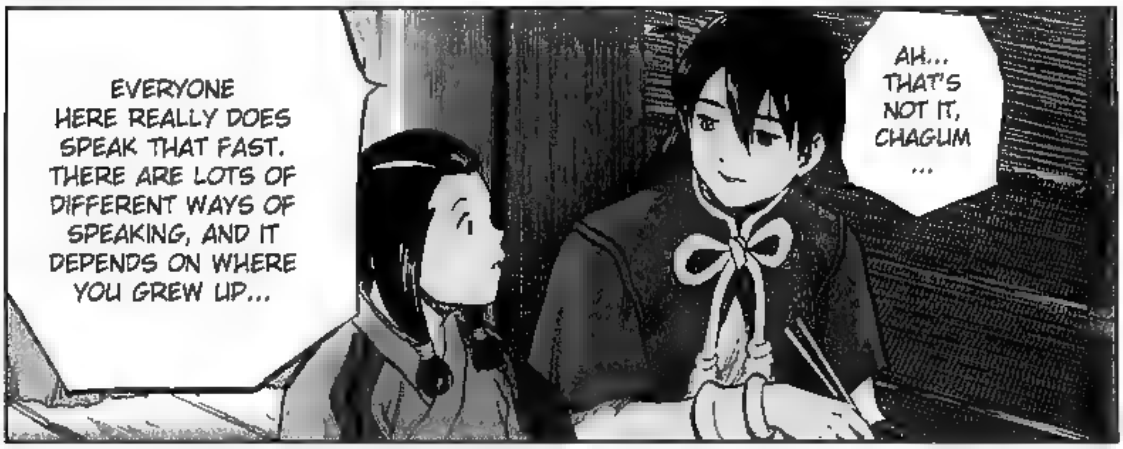
AH, AND I GOT US LUNCH, TOO! LET'S EAT BEFORE IT GETS COLD!


WELL, OF COURSE!


BUYING THINGS IS WHAT I DO! I KNOW WHERE THE BEST AND THE CHEAPEST ARE!
SO HOW IS IT? GOOD, RIGHT?

!
SO I WAS ABLE TO USE THE REMAINING MONEY TO BUY A BUNCH OF GOOD FOOD!
I'M PRETTY SURE I WAS ABLE TO GET A BETTER DEAL THAN MOST PEOPLE!!

...WHY ARE YOU TALKING SO FAST?
WHAT, IS THERE SOMETHING ON MY FACE?
I'M TALKING FAST?


EVERYONE HERE REALLY DOES SPEAK THAT FAST. THERE ARE LOTS OF DIFFERENT WAYS OF SPEAKING, AND IT DEPENDS ON WHERE YOU GREW UP...
AH... THAT'S NOT IT, CHAGUM ...

FARMERS SPEAK IN A MUMBLING MONOTONE...
TRADES-PEOPLE SPEAK SMOOTH AND FAST...

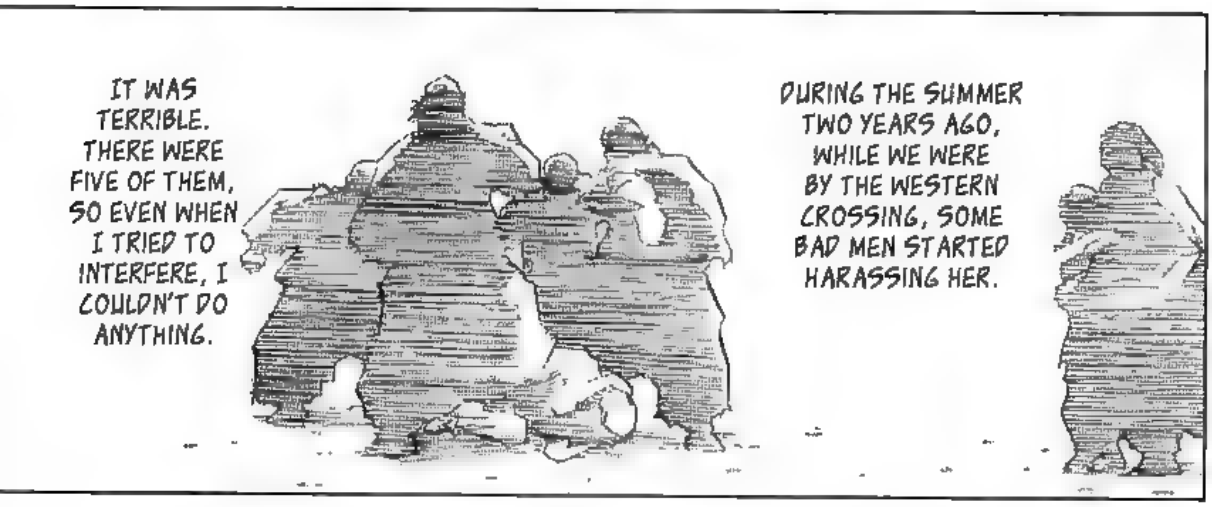
DO YOU KNOW? ME AND SAYA OWE OUR LIVES TO BALSA-SAN.
.....
AND IF YOU GO TO THE SEA, YOU'D FIND THAT SAILORS TALK VERY LOUDLY...
YOU WON'T FIND ANYONE ELSE WHO KNOWS SO MUCH. AND STRONG, TOO...
BALSA HAS TRAVELED EVERYWHERE.

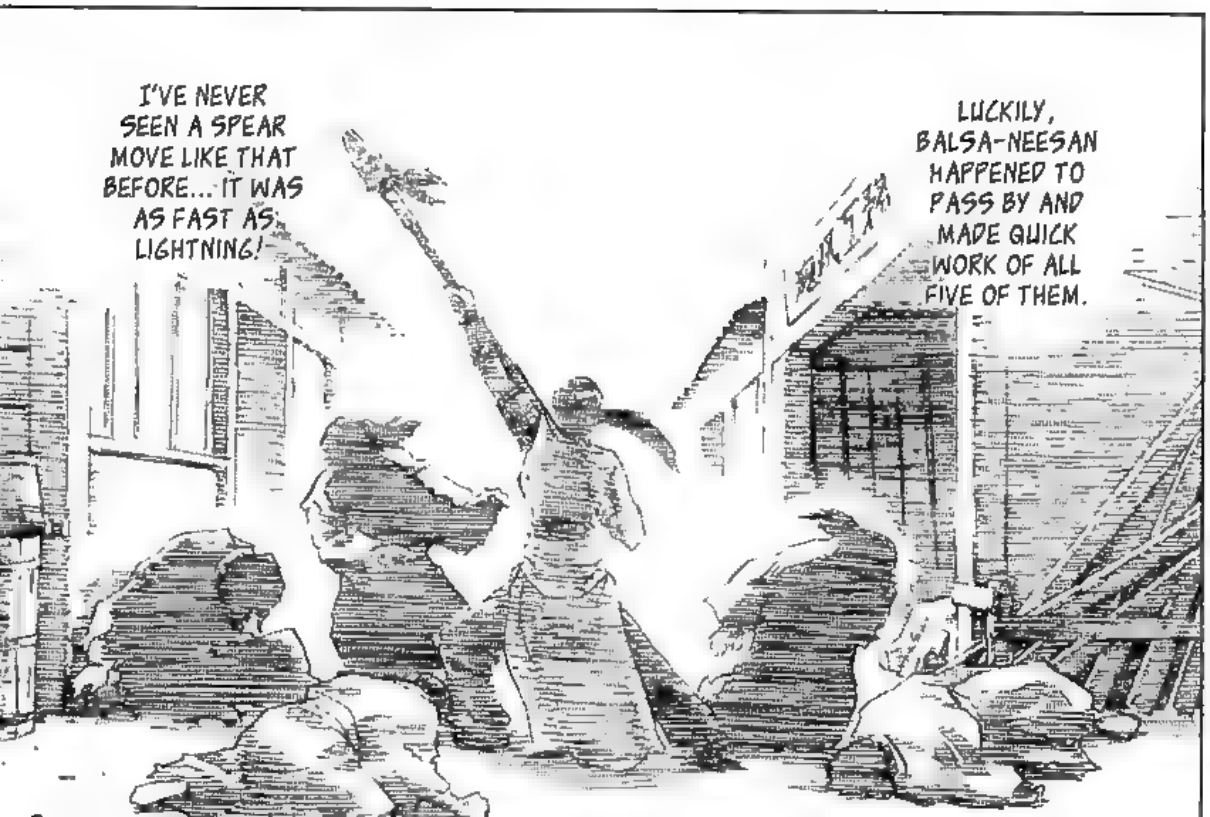
OOPS... I'LL LOWER MY VOICE, THEN...
THAT'S ENOUGH, TOUYA. AND PLEASE STOP SAYING MY NAME OUT LOUD SO MUCH...

SO ANYWAY, ME AND SAYA ARE ORPHANS. OUR PARENTS ABANDONED US HERE WHEN WE WERE TOO YOUNG TO EVEN REMEMBER THEIR FACES.

THE MERCHANTS HERE ARE PRETTY RICH, SO WE WOULD ASK FOR THEIR LEFTOVERS. AND, WELL... SOMETIMES I'D STEAL STUFF TOO, TO SURVIVE. IT'S THE SAME FOR SAYA, TOO... SO I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT OF HER AS MY SISTER AS WE LIVED TOGETHER.

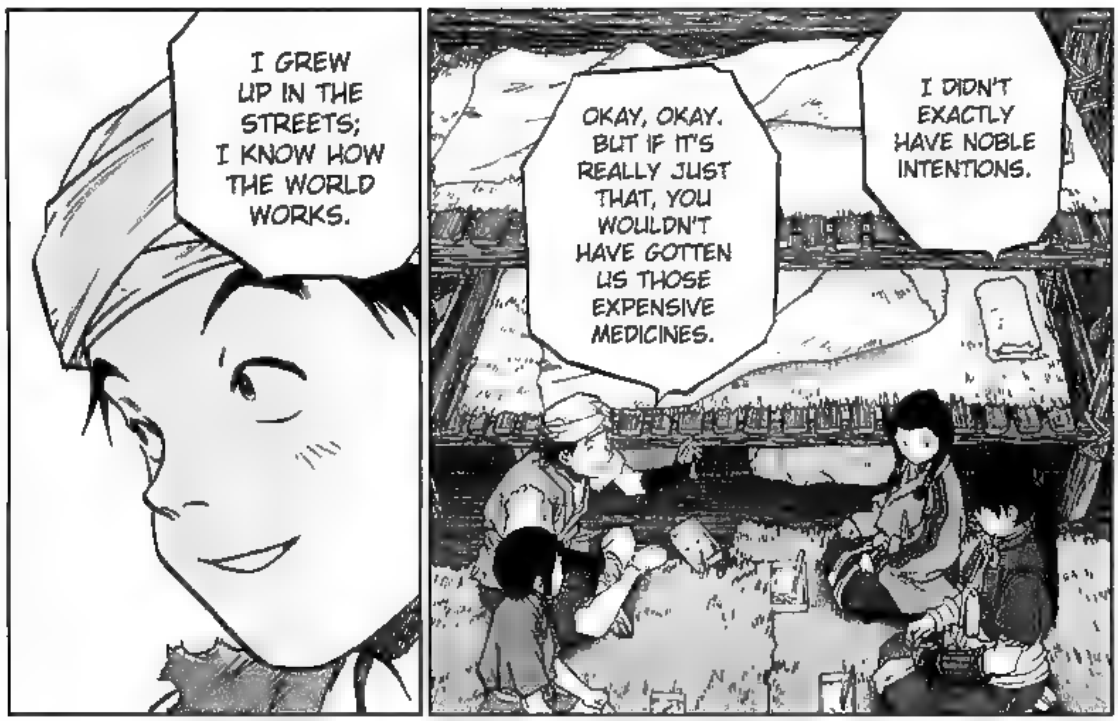
BUT, WELL, LOOK AT HOW SAYA'S FACE IS RIGHT NOW.


IT WAS TERRIBLE. THERE WERE FIVE OF THEM, SO EVEN WHEN I TRIED TO INTERFERE, I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING.
DURING THE SUMMER TWO YEARS AGO, WHILE WE WERE BY THE WESTERN CROSSING, SOME BAD MEN STARTED HARASSING HER.


I'VE NEVER SEEN A SPEAR MOVE LIKE THAT BEFORE... IT WAS AS FAST AS LIGHTNING!
LUCKILY, BALSA-NEESAN HAPPENED TO PASS BY AND MADE QUICK WORK OF ALL FIVE OF THEM.

BUT BALSA-NEESAN SAVED US WITHOUT ASKING FOR ANYTHING IN RETURN.
SO THEN... WE WERE SAVED. I NEVER THOUGHT ANYONE WOULD EVER HELP SOME POOR ERRAND KIDS LIKE US...

I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I? BACK THEN I WAS NEW IN TOWN, WITH A NEW JOB. I WANTED TO MAKE A NAME FOR MYSELF, TO SHOW MY SKILLS.....
YOU'RE EXAGGER-ATING.

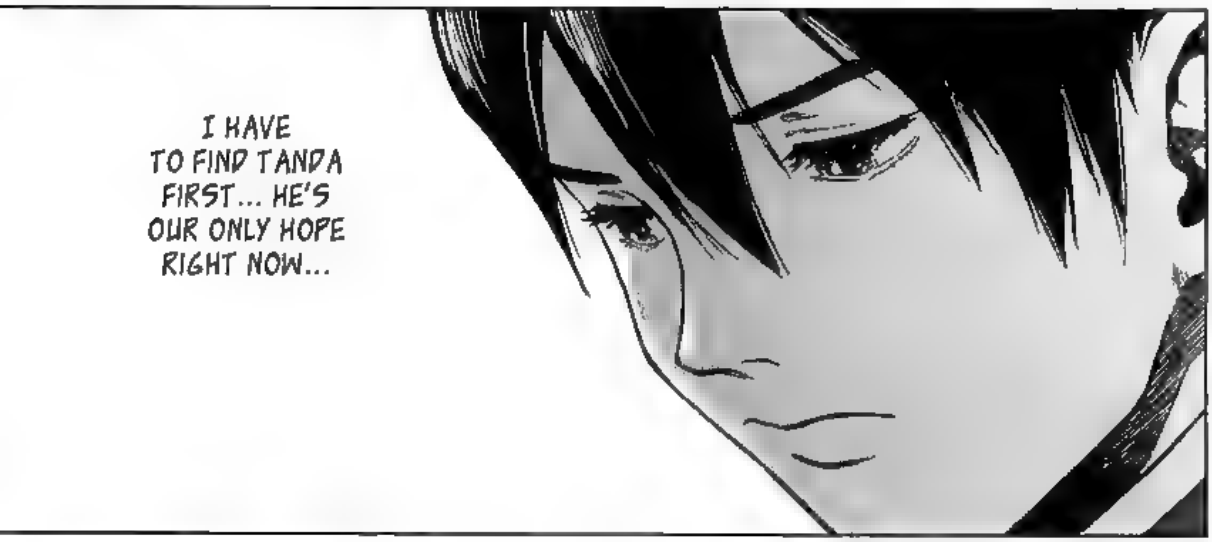

I GREW UP IN THE STREETS; I KNOW HOW THE WORLD WORKS.
OKAY, OKAY. BUT IF IT'S REALLY JUST THAT, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN US THOSE EXPENSIVE MEDICINES.
I DIDN'T EXACTLY HAVE NOBLE INTENTIONS.

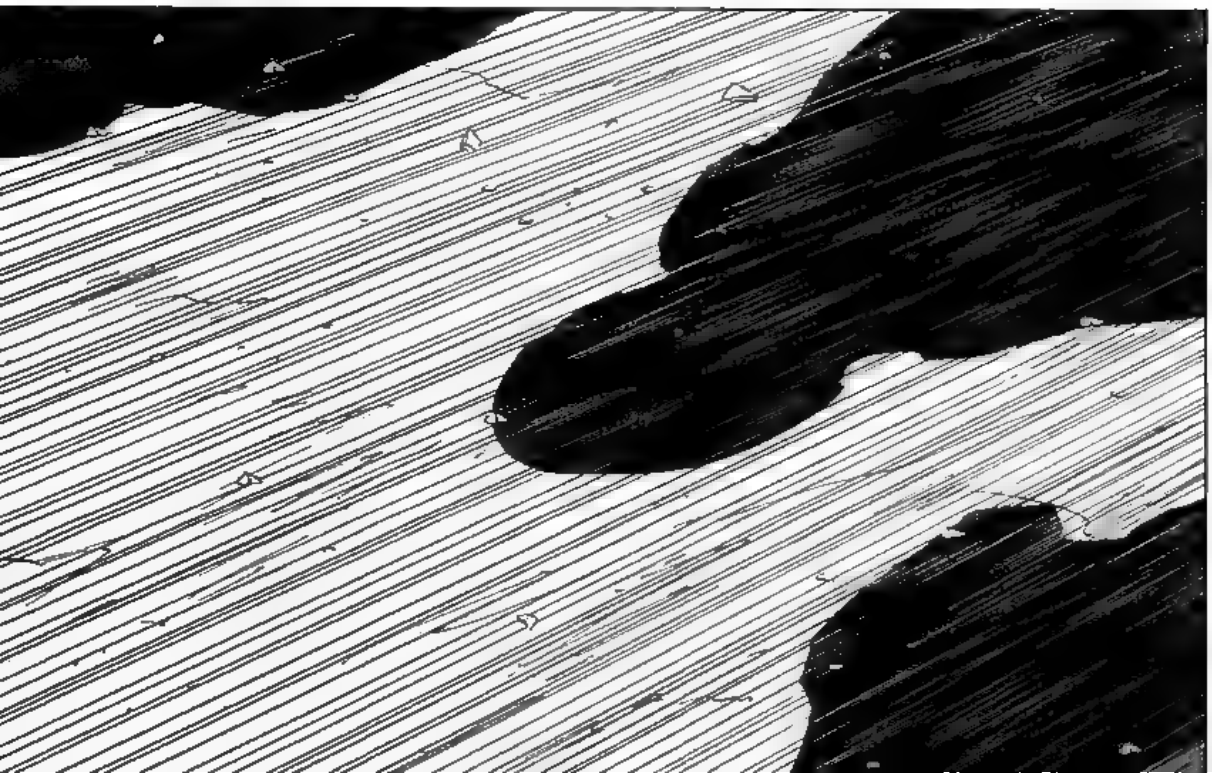
...
THAT'S RIGHT
BUT PEOPLE WHO HELP OUT WITHOUT EXPECTING ANYTHING IN RETURN ARE THE ONES WITH GOOD HEARTS.
PEOPLE WHO AREN'T KIND BY NATURE WOULDN'T HAVE DONE ANYTHING.
BALSA-NEESAN MIGHT LOOK INTIMIDATING... BUT SHE'S A KIND PERSON. SHE WOULDN'T HAVE SAVED US OTHERWISE.
THANKS..... BUT I STILL THINK YOU'RE OVERSTATING IT...
.....

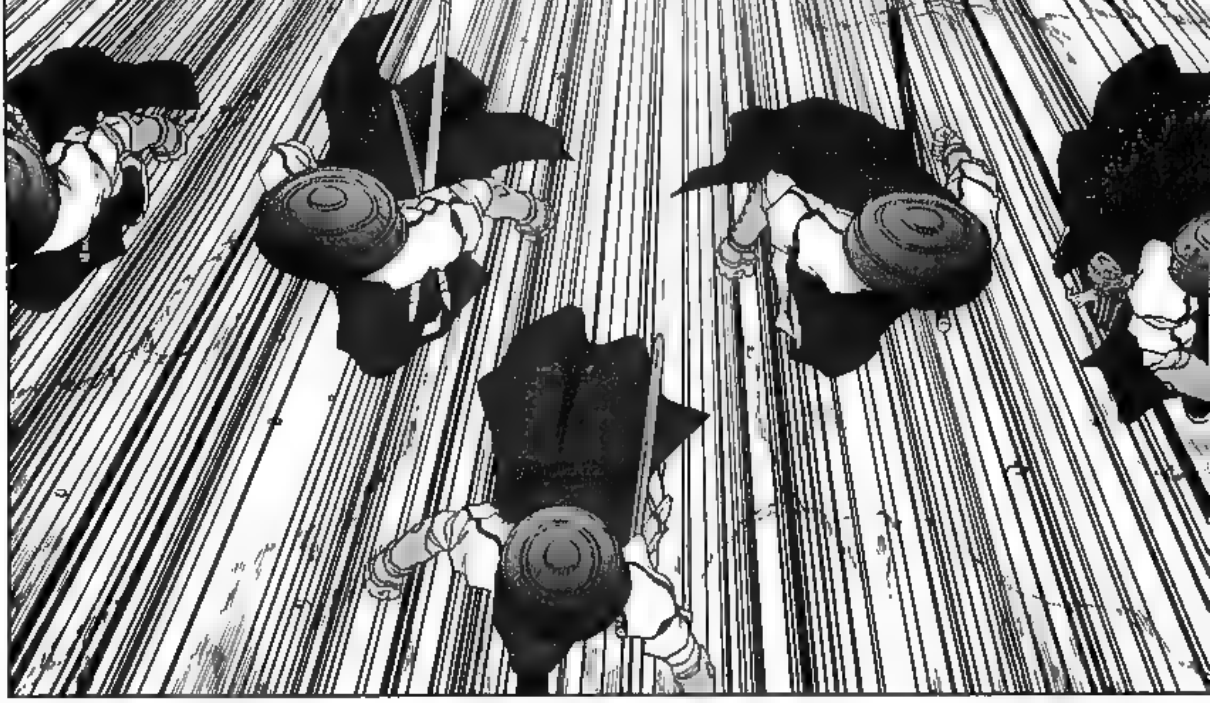
I WONDER... IF WE'LL GET PURSUED FROM HERE. WE PROBABLY WILL...

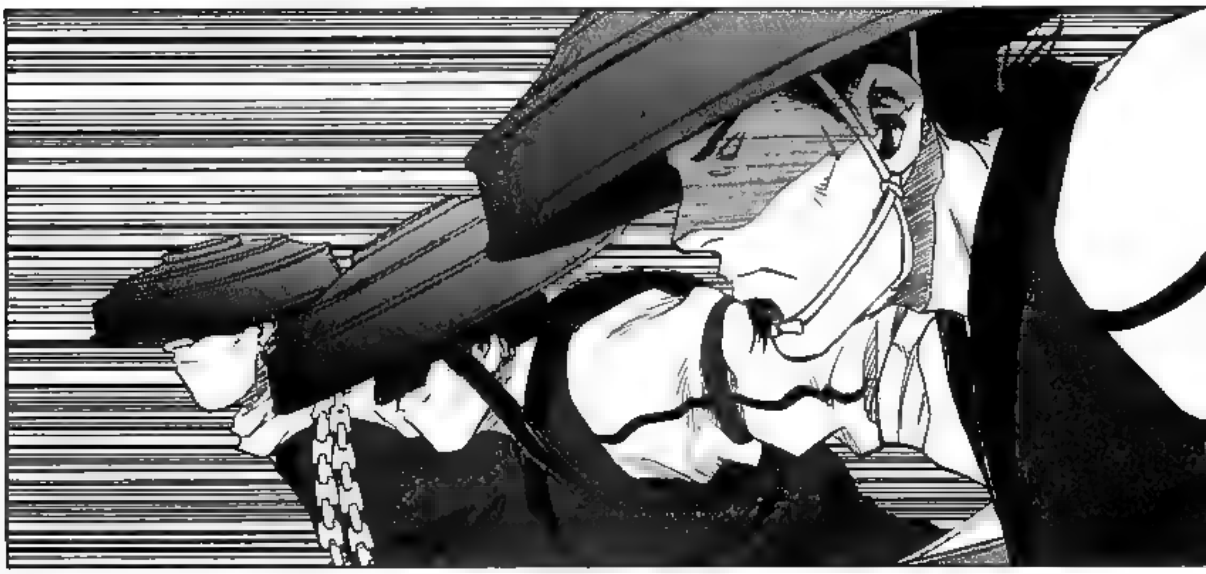
SOON THEY'LL FIND OUT THAT THE PRINCE'S BODY ISN'T WITHIN THE BURNED RUINS... FOLLOWING THAT, IT'S NOT GOING TO TAKE LONG FOR THOSE ASSASSINS TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED...

THAT IS THE MUCH MORE SERIOUS ISSUE. IT'S NOT SOMETHING WE CAN JUST HIDE AND RUN AWAY FROM.
BUT THE REAL PROBLEM HERE AREN'T THE ASSASSINS... IT'S WHATEVER IS LIVING INSIDE THIS CHILD...


I HAVE TO FIND TANDA FIRST... HE'S OUR ONLY HOPE RIGHT NOW...



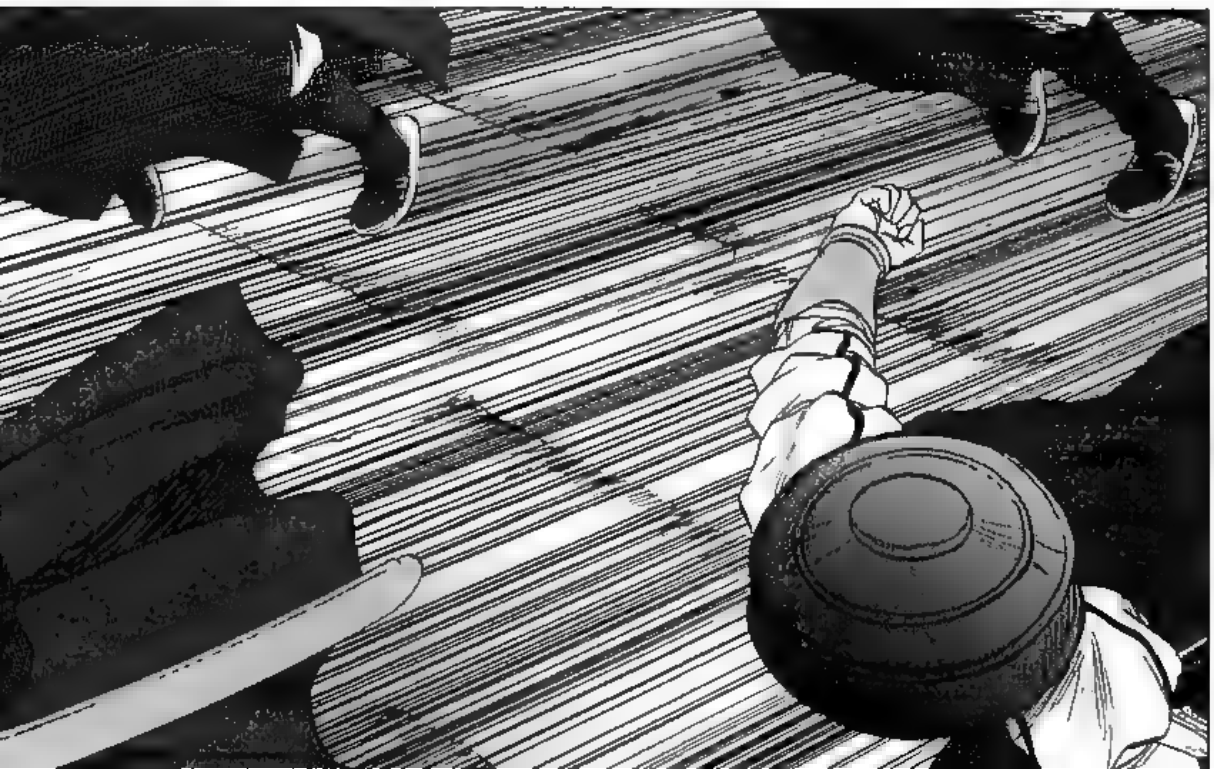


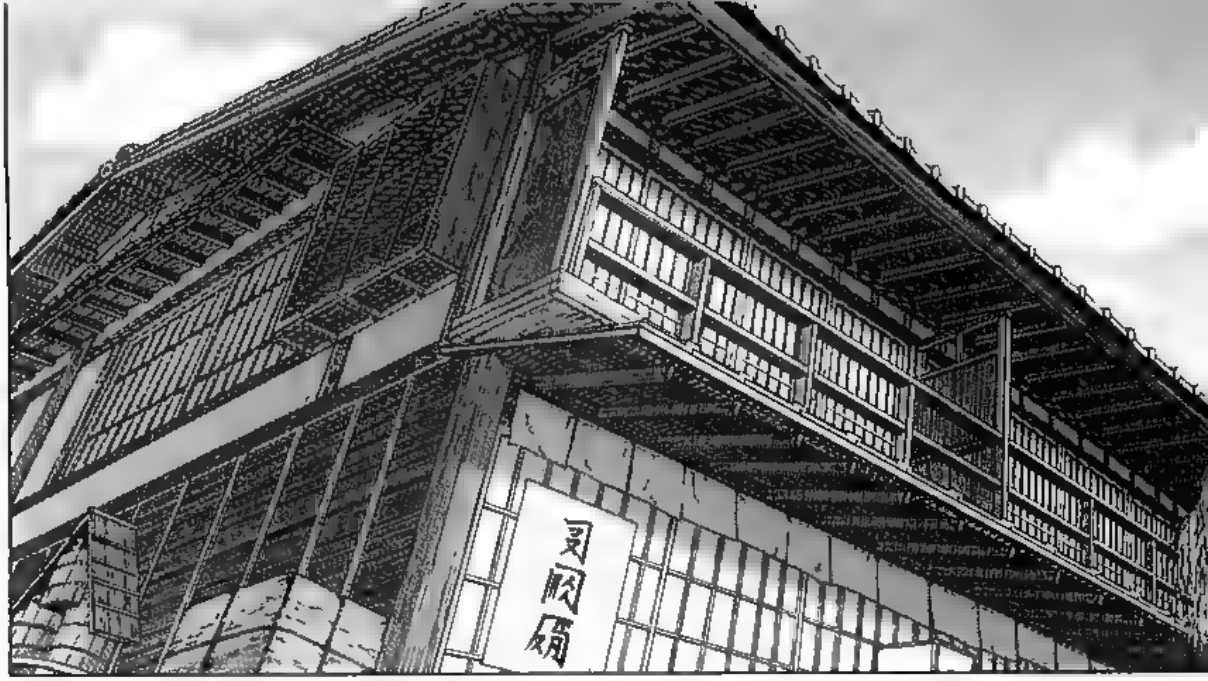


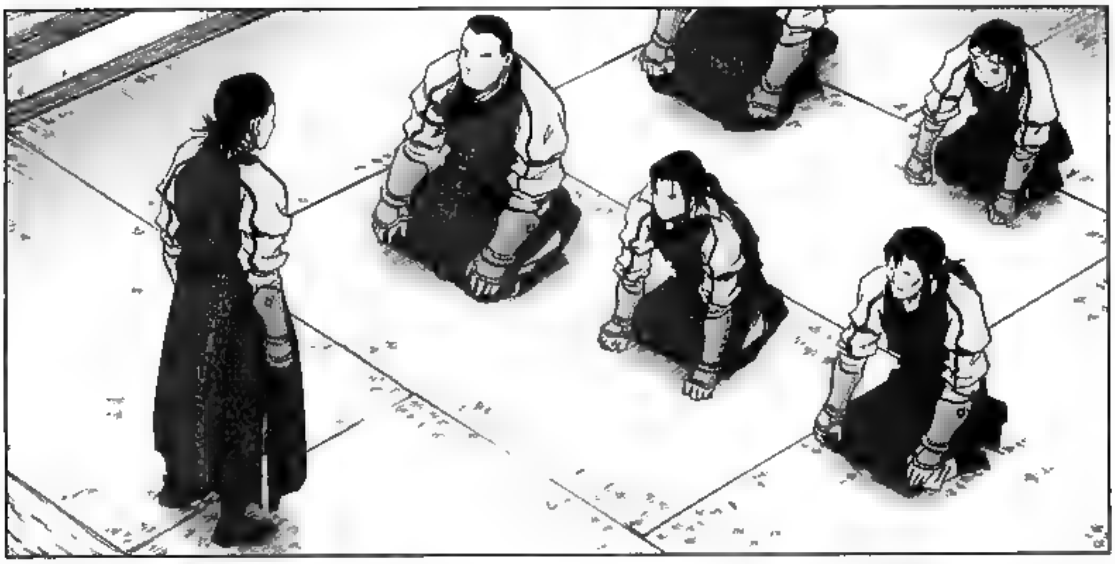
AH... THE DESCENDANTS OF THE 8 WARRIORS THAT ACCOMPANIED OUR FOUNDING FATHER EMPEROR TORGAL TO BANISH THE WATER SPIRIT 200 YEARS AGO!
HUNTERS...?

IT'S COMMON FOR HUNTERS TO SPEND THEIR WHOLE LIVES BEING IMPERIAL GUARDS, BUT THERE IS A LIGHT AND A DARKNESS THAT EXISTS...
ONLY THE YOUNGEST SON IN THE FAMILY CAN INHERIT THE ABILITIES OF A HUNTER AND RESPOND TO THE EMPEROR'S COMMANDS...

THIS WAS A CONCEPT CREATED BY THE STAR DIVINERS OF 200 YEARS AGO TO CONCEAL THE NATURE OF THE HUNTERS FROM THE PUBLIC
ON ONE HAND, THEY'RE CALLED THE "EMPEROR'S SHIELD," AND GUARD THE EMPEROR. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY'RE ALSO CALLED THE "EMPEROR'S SHADOW," WHO SECRETLY DO THE WORK OF DARKNESS AS SHADOWS.







MERCHANTS IN THIS TOWN TEND TO BAND TOGETHER. THEY'RE PARTICULARLY DISTRUSTFUL. I HAD TO GAIN THEIR CONFIDENCE FIRST TO GET THEM TO TRUST ME.

IT LOOKS LIKE THIS BALSA HAS A GOOD REPUTATION AS A BODYGUARD.
CHIEF...

WE HAVE PEOPLE ALL OVER TOWN... I'VE ALREADY PLANTED MEN ON EVERY CORNER OF THE HIGHWAY.
SKILLFUL AND SMART, HUH...

THE ONLY THING THEY CAN DO IS TO TRAVERSE THE AOGIRI MOUNTAIN RANGE AT NIGHT WHEN THERE ARE NO PEOPLE...
IF THAT WOMAN MANAGED TO ESCAPE WITH THE PRINCE...

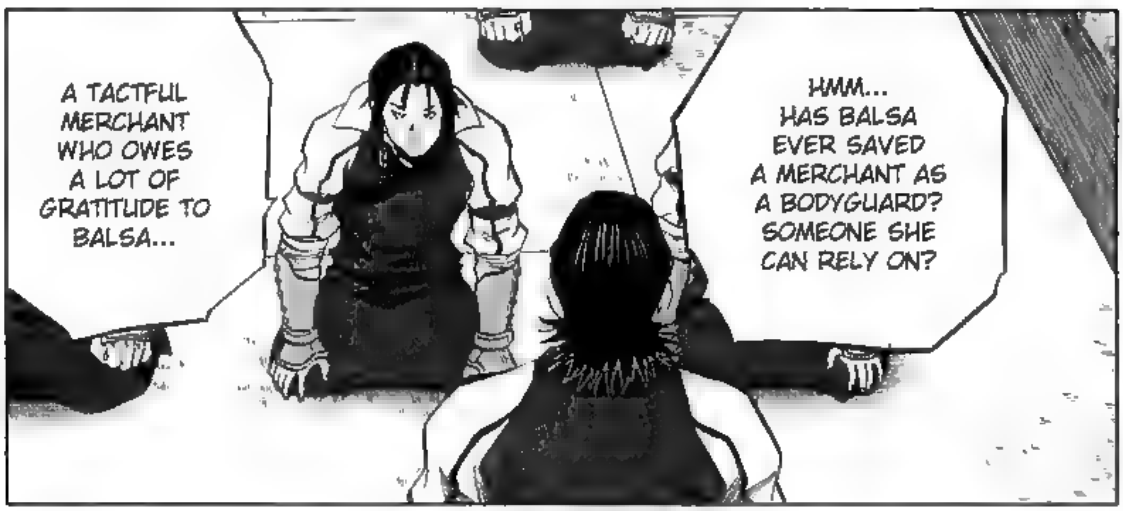
AND SHE CAN'T DO THAT HERSELF SINCE NO ONE KNOWS HER IN THIS TOWN, WHICH MEANS SHE'S UNTRUST-WORTHY.
...IF THAT HAPPENS, THE FIRST THING THEY HAVE TO DO IS TO BUY THE PROVISIONS THEY NEED TO GET THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

SHE WOULD HAVE TO ASK FOR SOMEONE ELSE'S HELP.
SO WHAT WOULD SHE DO? JIN!

WE HAVE TO INVESTIGATE BALSA'S FRIENDS AND SEE IF THERE'S SOMEONE WHO HAD THE ABILITY TO DO HER SHOPPING FOR HER.
GOOD. I'D BET ON IT.

BUT THIS TOWN IS BIG... ...WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO NARROW DOWN THE SEARCH AREAS...
AND CHECK OUT ANYONE WHO LOOKS LIKE THEY'VE BOUGHT GEAR FOR TREKKING.

RIGHT. WE NEED TO FIND THE MERCHANT WHO HELPED HER...
I HEARD THIS MORNING ABOUT SOMEONE WHO MIGHT HAVE HELPED BALSA. SEE IF WE CAN FIND OUT SOMETHING.

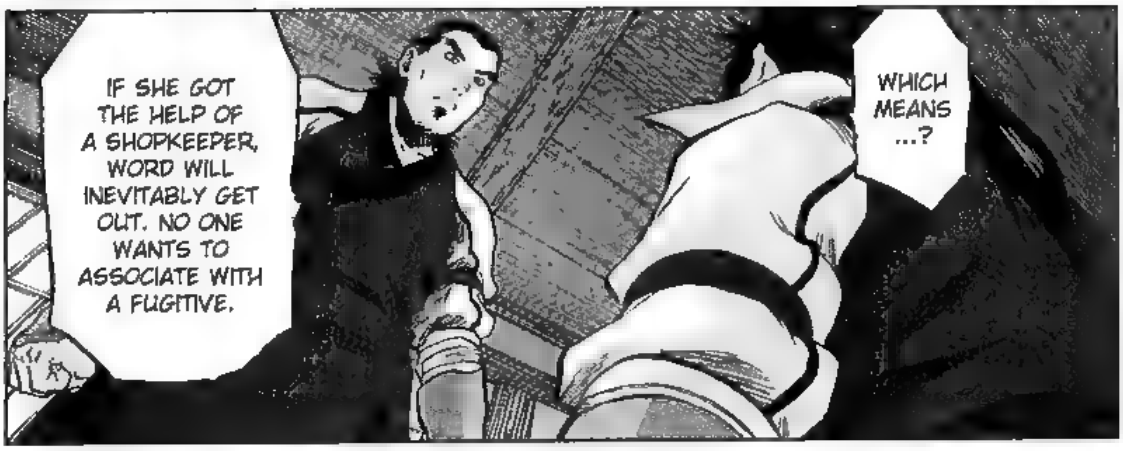

A TACTFUL MERCHANT WHO OWES A LOT OF GRATITUDE TO BALSA...
HMM... HAS BALSA EVER SAVED A MERCHANT AS A BODYGUARD? SOMEONE SHE CAN RELY ON?

I SAW TWO PEOPLE WHILE I WAS INVESTIGATING... BUT THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE THEY'D BE WORTH SAVING TO BALSA. I WOULDN'T TRUST THEM, IF IT WAS ME.
YUN!
WHAT DO YOU THINK, ZEN?
.....

I SEE... SHE'S NOT GOING TO BE GETTING ALL THAT IN ONE STORE.
IF SHE'S PLANNING TO CROSS THE MOUNTAINS, SHE WOULD NEED A SUPPLY OF FOOD, SOME FUR TO KEEP WARM AND OIL PAPER FOR THE RAIN.....

YES. BUT IT'S NOT EXACTLY HARD FOR HER TO GET A KID OR A SHOP-KEEPER TO HELP HER BUY ALL THOSE THINGS.

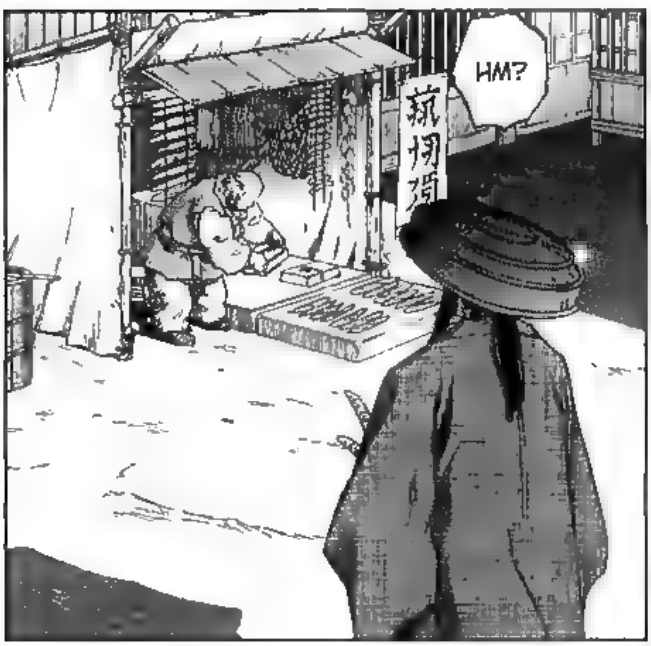
SEE... I DON'T THINK MERCHANTS ARE VERY SECRETIVE...
IS THERE SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND, CHIEF?
HMM...


IF SHE GOT THE HELP OF A SHOPKEEPER, WORD WILL INEVITABLY GET OUT. NO ONE WANTS TO ASSOCIATE WITH A FUGITIVE.
WHICH MEANS ...?

BUT IF SHE KNOWS HE'S BEING FOLLOWED, SHE PROBABLY DOESN'T KNOW WHERE THE PURSUERS ARE.
THE FACT THAT THE QUEEN ENTRUSTED THE PRINCE TO BALSA MEANS THAT SHE KNOWS WHAT WE'RE AFTER.

GO!!
THEN IT'S NOTHING BUT A RACE WITH TIME. GO TO ALL THE SHOPS THAT SELL ANYTHING THAT CAN BE USED TO CROSS A MOUNTAIN. SCOUR EACH AND EVERY ONE UNTIL THERE'S NOTHING LEFT.

DASH
DASH
DASH DASH


HM?

IT'S NOT THIS ONE EITHER ...
DAMN... THE SUN IS SETTING. I SHOULD CALL IT A DAY...

DRIED FOOD...
AHH, ARE YOU CLOSING ALREADY? CAN I STILL BUY SOME THINGS?
I'M GOING TO BE TRAVELLING THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS SOON, SO DO YOU HAPPEN TO HAVE SOME BEEF SHOULDER?
OF COURSE. WHAT DO YOU NEED?
OH? YOU MEAN A LOT OF PEOPLE BOUGHT BEEF RECENTLY?
I'M ALL OUT OF BEEF SHOULDERS. AND I DON'T USUALLY SELL THAT MUCH OF THEM...

THERE WAS ONLY ONE. IT WAS SOME ERRAND BOY...
SOME LABORER WHO'S ABOUT TO TREK THE MOUNTAIN AND WORK IN ANOTHER TOWN PROBABLY COMMISSIONED THE BOY.
?
AN ERRAND BOY...?!
THAT'S IT!!

Seirei no Moribito

by Uehashi Nahoko, Futatsugi Saki, & Fujiwara Kamui

Chapter 4

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qc > Ishitori

The End

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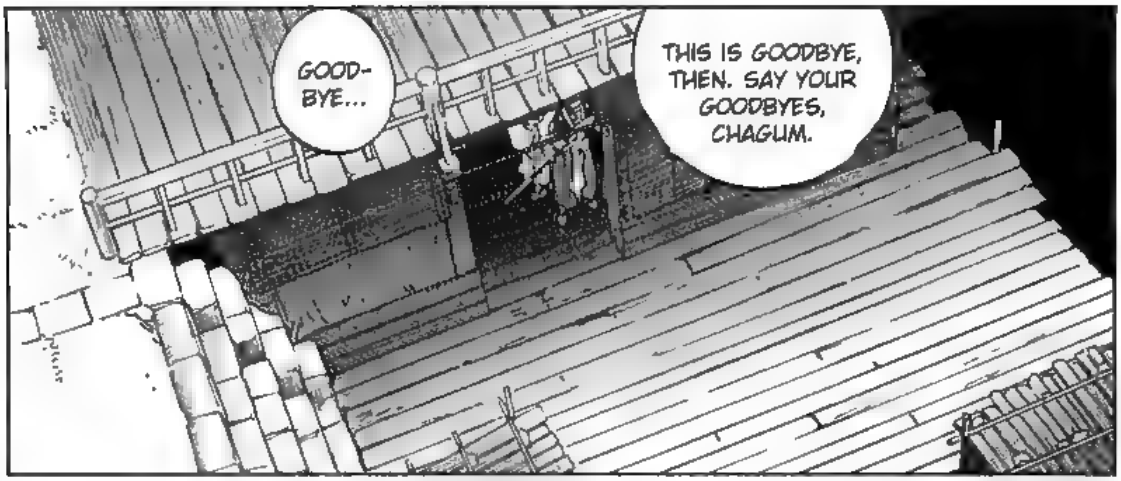
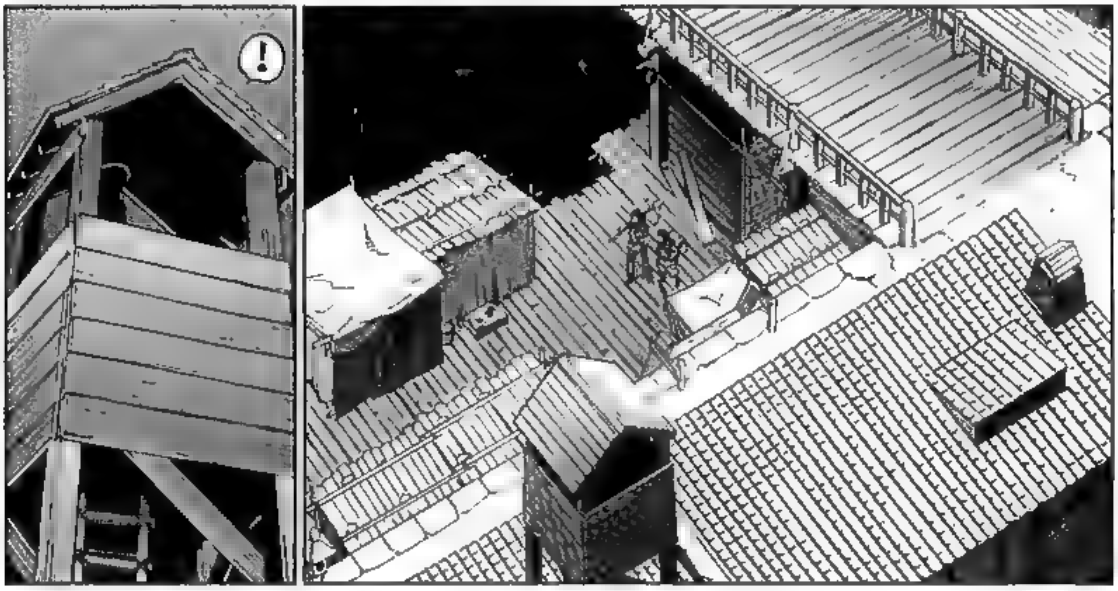
CHAPTER 4
THE HUNTER AND THE HUNTED

IT WOULD BE A BIG MISTAKE NOT TO USE SOME ANIMAL SKIN TO PROTECT IT.
MY STOMACH FEELS ITCHY...
IF SOMEONE STABS YOU FROM BEHIND, WITHOUT YOUR RIBS, IT'S GOING TO PIERCE STRAIGHT TO YOUR HEART.
SO IT MIGHT FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE, BUT IT'S BETTER THAN DYING.
.....
BUT YOU'RE ALREADY WEARING A PACK AS TALL AS YOUR NECK, SO YOUR BACK IS PROTECTED FROM ANY ARROWS THAT MIGHT COME FLYING FROM BEHIND.

SHOULD I GO WITH YOU UP TO THE BASE OF THE MOUNTAIN? I CAN BE THERE TO MAKE SURE NO ONE'S FOLLOWING YOU.
YOU'VE BEEN A GREAT HELP, TOUYA, SAYA. I HOPE WE GET THE CHANCE TO MEET AGAIN.
OKAY, LET'S GO.
IF SOMEONE COMES FOR YOU, JUST TELL THEM EVERYTHING... UNDERSTAND? I'M SURE WE CAN GET AWAY EVEN IF YOU TALK.
WE'LL BE FINE. BUT I APPRECIATE THE THOUGHT, THANK YOU.
OKAY, BALSA-SAN!
WE'VE INTRUDED ON YOU ENOUGH. THANK YOU FOR ALL THE HELP.
EVEN IF WE WERE BEING FOLLOWED, YOU WOULD BE KILLED IN ONE BLOW, BEFORE YOU EVEN REALIZED IT.
YOU DON'T NEED TO FEEL ANY KIND OF OBLIGATION TO ME AFTER THIS.


GOOD-BYE...
THIS IS GOODBYE, THEN. SAY YOUR GOODBYES, CHAGUM.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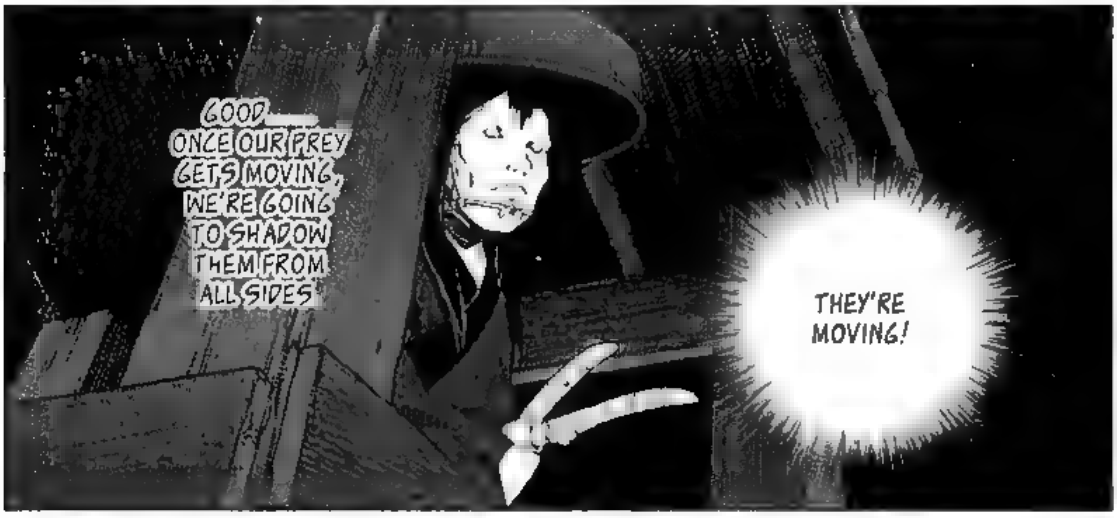
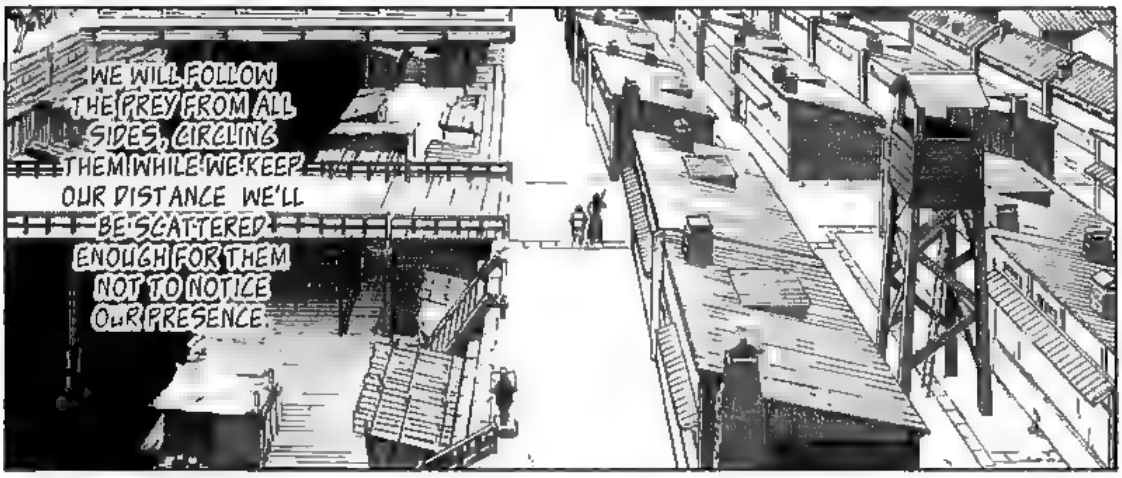
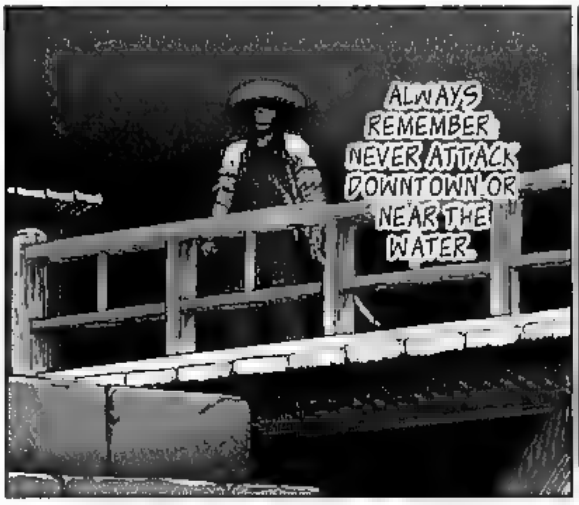
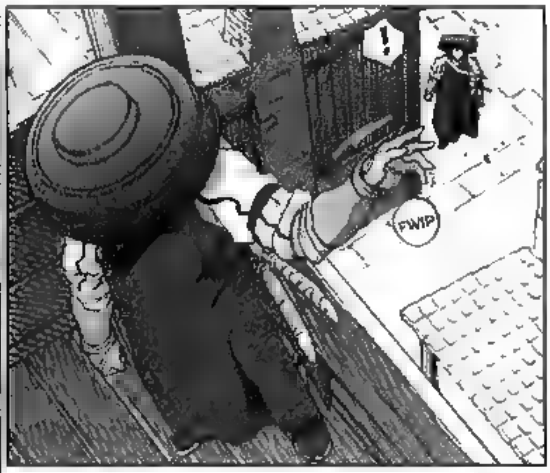

GOOD. ONCE OUR PREY GETS MOVING, WE'RE GOING TO SHADOW THEM FROM ALL SIDES.
THEY'RE MOVING!


WE WILL FOLLOW THE PREY FROM ALL SIDES, CIRCLING THEM! WHILE WE KEEP OUR DISTANCE WE'LL BE SCATTERED ENOUGH FOR THEM NOT TO NOTICE OUR PRESENCE.


ALWAYS REMEMBER NEVER ATTACK DOWNTOWN OR NEAR THE WATER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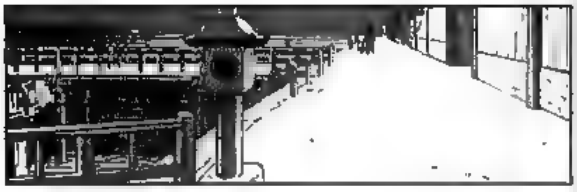
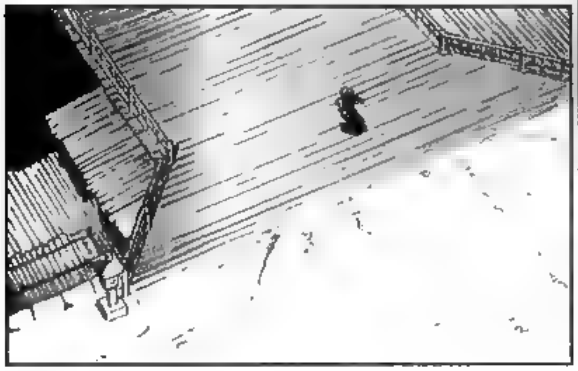
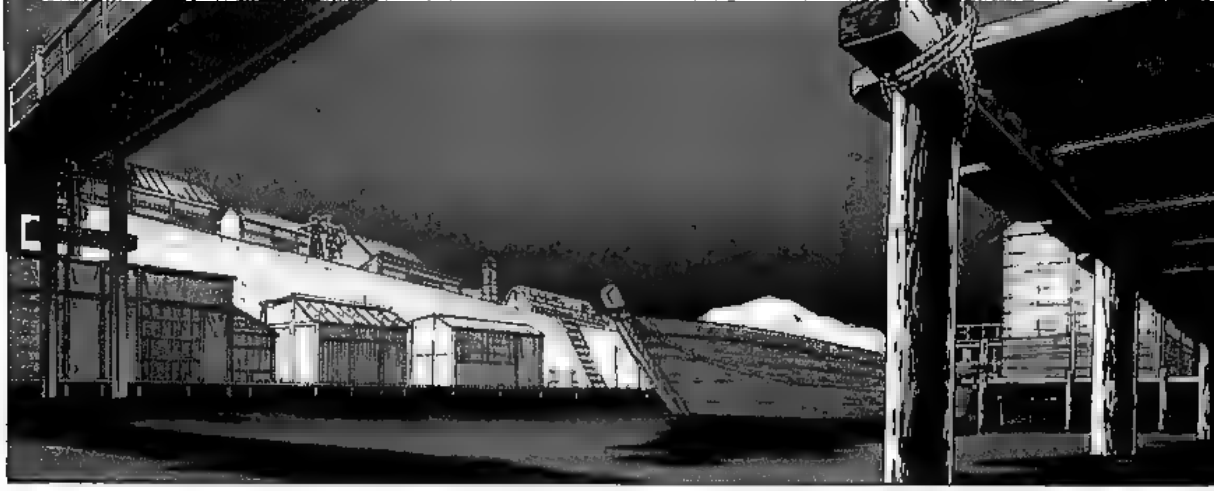
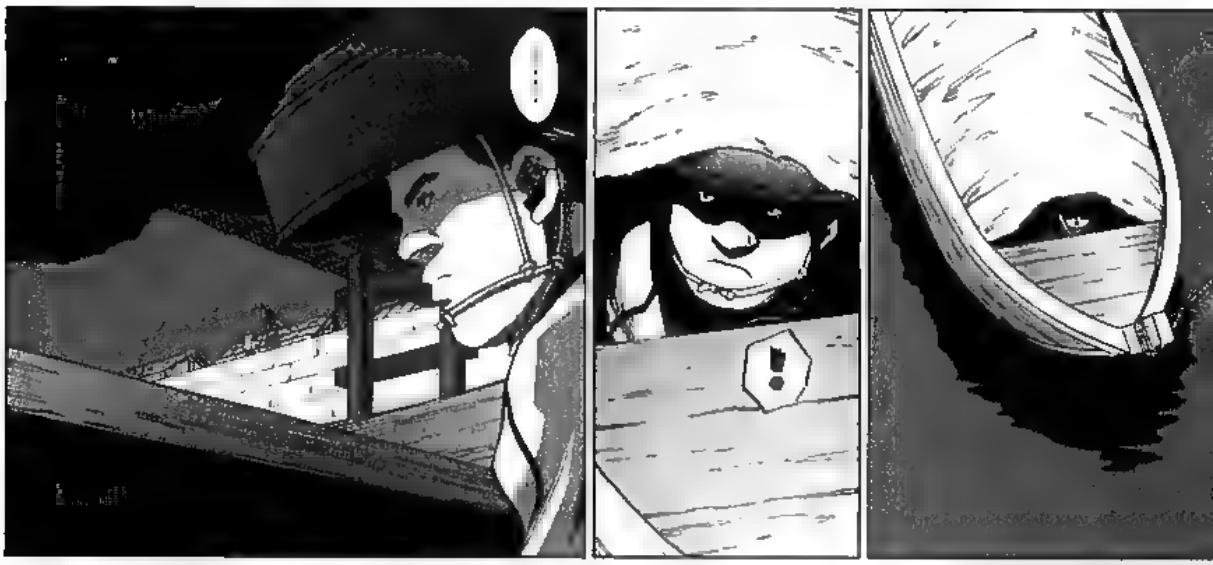
FWIP

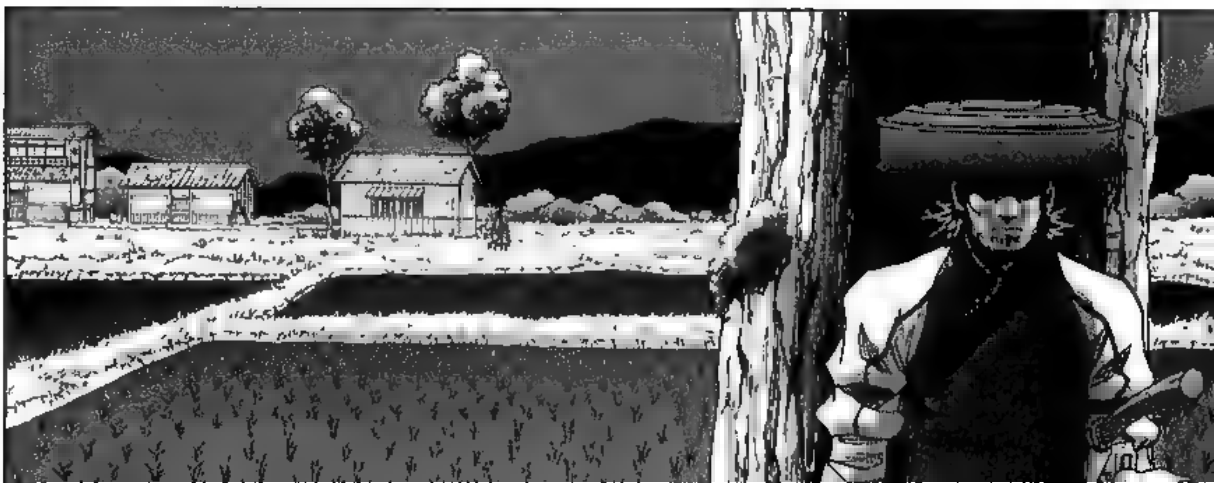




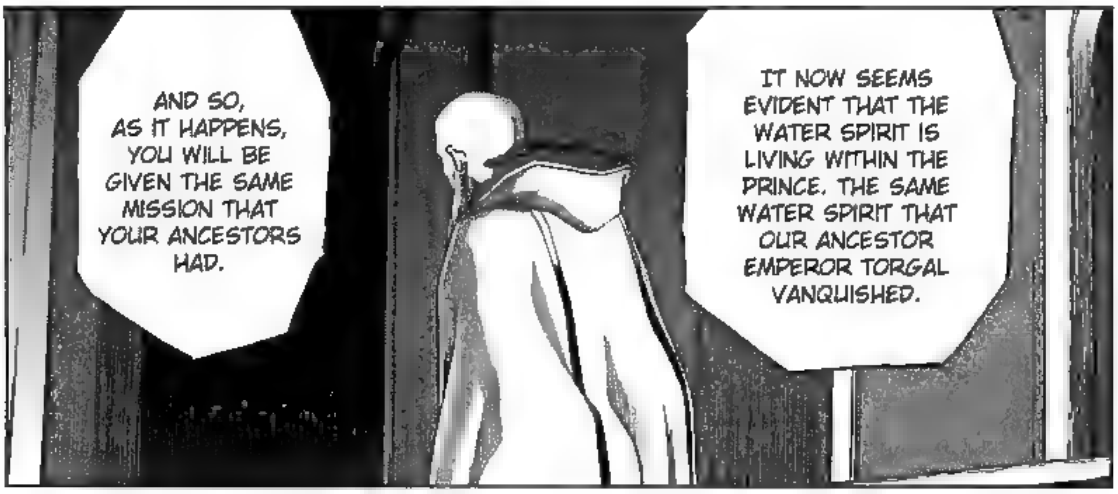
NOD

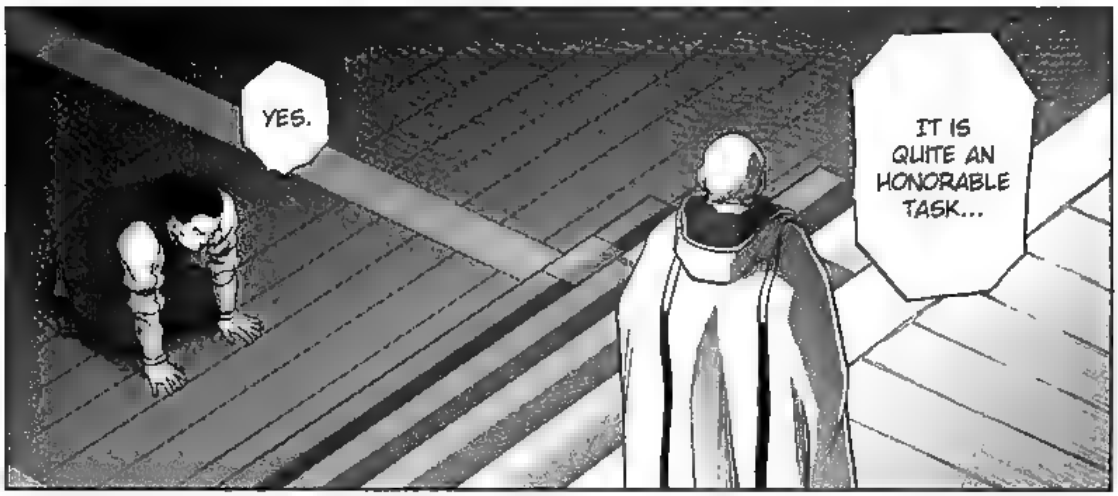




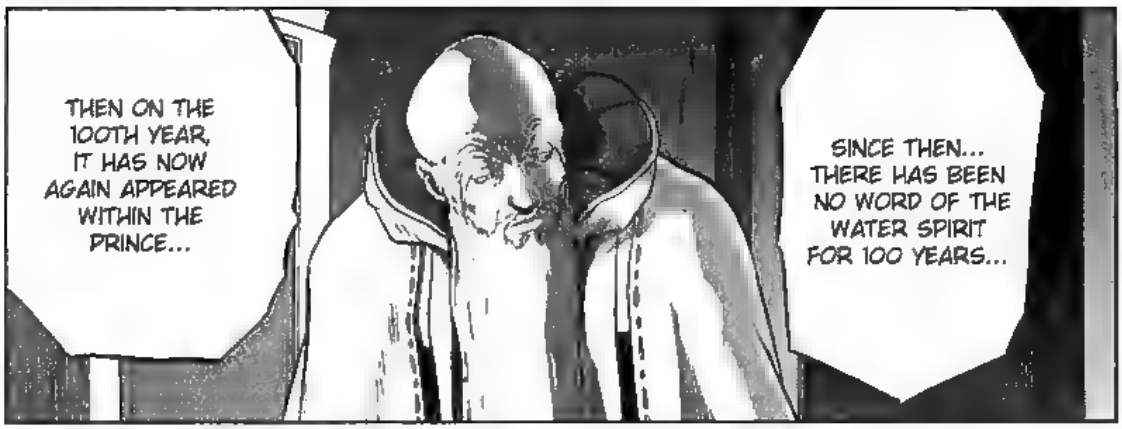


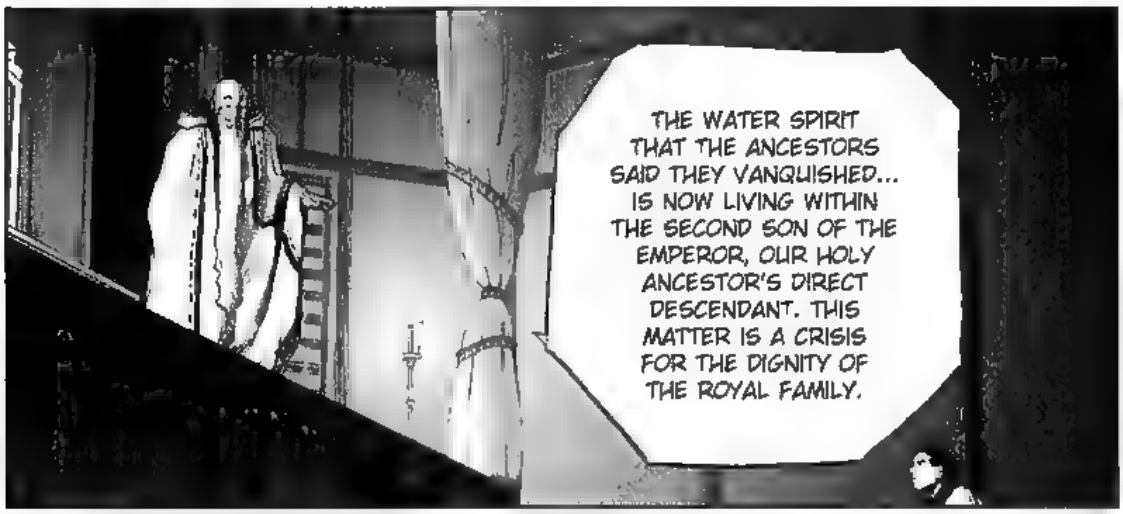
MON...
.....
YOU DON'T NEED TO CONCEAL THE FACT THAT YOU'RE WORRIED.
IN TRUTH... I'VE PLANNED TO HAVE THE PRINCE ASSASSINATED AS A CONTINGENCY PLAN IN CASE EVERYTHING FAILS.
!
LISTEN WELL...
SO WE CAN FIND OUT WHAT EXACTLY IT IS THAT IS LIVING WITHIN THE PRINCE.


AND SO, AS IT HAPPENS, YOU WILL BE GIVEN THE SAME MISSION THAT YOUR ANCESTORS HAD.
IT NOW SEEMS EVIDENT THAT THE WATER SPIRIT IS LIVING WITHIN THE PRINCE. THE SAME WATER SPIRIT THAT OUR ANCESTOR EMPEROR TORGAL VANQUISHED.


YES.
IT IS QUITE AN HONORABLE TASK...

THEN, THE CHILD WITHIN WHICH THE SPIRIT LIVED WAS TORN IN TWO AND DIED.
THE HUNTERS BACK THEN WERE OVER-WHELMED BY THE WATER SPIRIT'S POWER, HAVING BARELY EVEN STARTED THEIR INVESTIGATION.
I LEARNED FROM MY FATHER... THAT 100 YEARS AGO, A WATER SPIRIT DID COME FORTH IN THIS LAND.

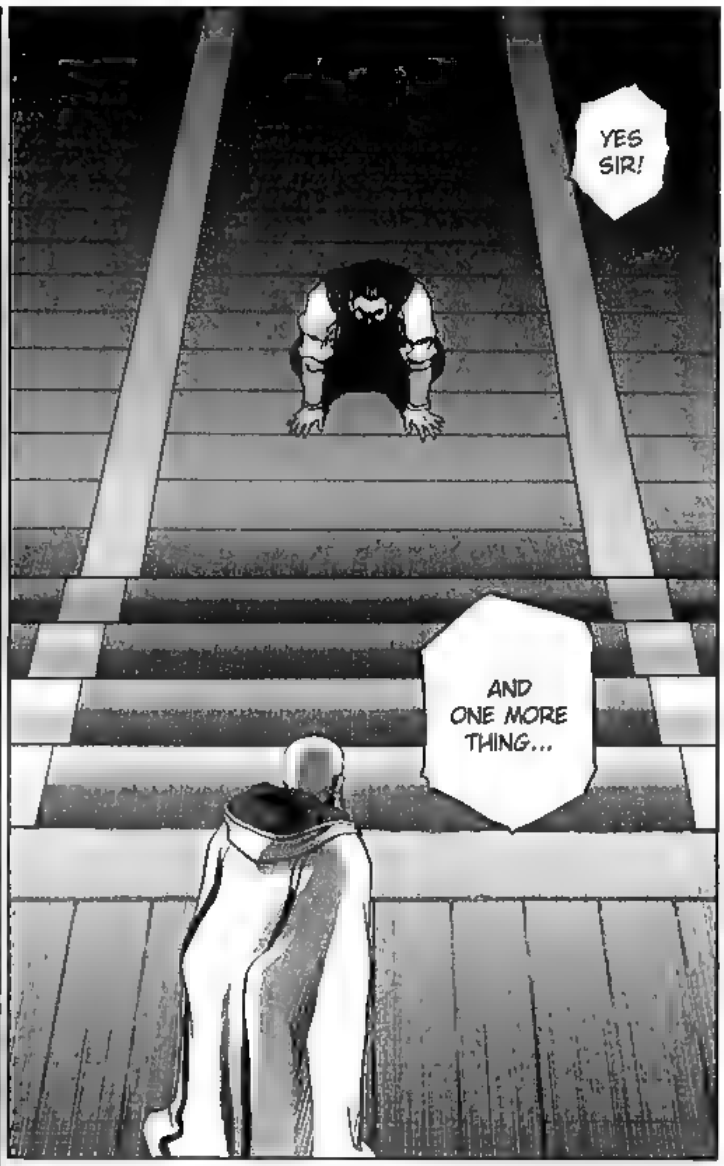

THEN ON THE 100TH YEAR, IT HAS NOW AGAIN APPEARED WITHIN THE PRINCE...
SINCE THEN... THERE HAS BEEN NO WORD OF THE WATER SPIRIT FOR 100 YEARS...


THE WATER SPIRIT THAT THE ANCESTORS SAID THEY VANQUISHED... IS NOW LIVING WITHIN THE SECOND SON OF THE EMPEROR, OUR HOLY ANCESTOR'S DIRECT DESCENDANT. THIS MATTER IS A CRISIS FOR THE DIGNITY OF THE ROYAL FAMILY.

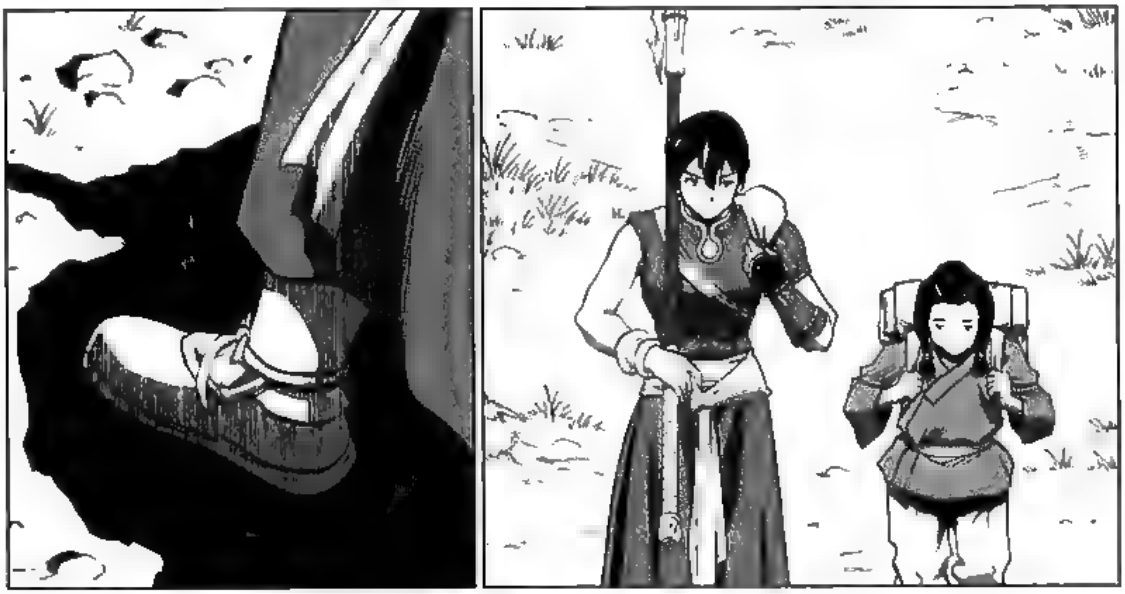
WE HAVE TO TAKE THE PRINCE BEFORE HE GETS KILLED BY THE SPIRIT!
...I DO NOT KNOW IF THIS IS THE WATER SPIRIT'S WAY TO EXACT ITS REVENGE... IF IT IS, WE WOULD HAVE TO COMPLETELY DESTROY IT!

KILL THAT BODYGUARD WHO TOOK THE PRINCE!
BUT BRING THE PRINCE HERE ALIVE!

THE WATER SPIRIT SEEMS TO BE MANIPULATING THE PRINCE. WE HAVE TO KEEP THAT IN MIND AS WE SEARCH FOR HIM.


YES SIR!
AND ONE MORE THING...

I HAVE TO TELL MY MEN...
WE HAVE TO BE ESPECIALLY CAREFUL NEAR BODIES OF WATER.



IT'S AWFULLY BRIGHT TONIGHT... OUR SHADOWS LOOK EXTRA DARK.

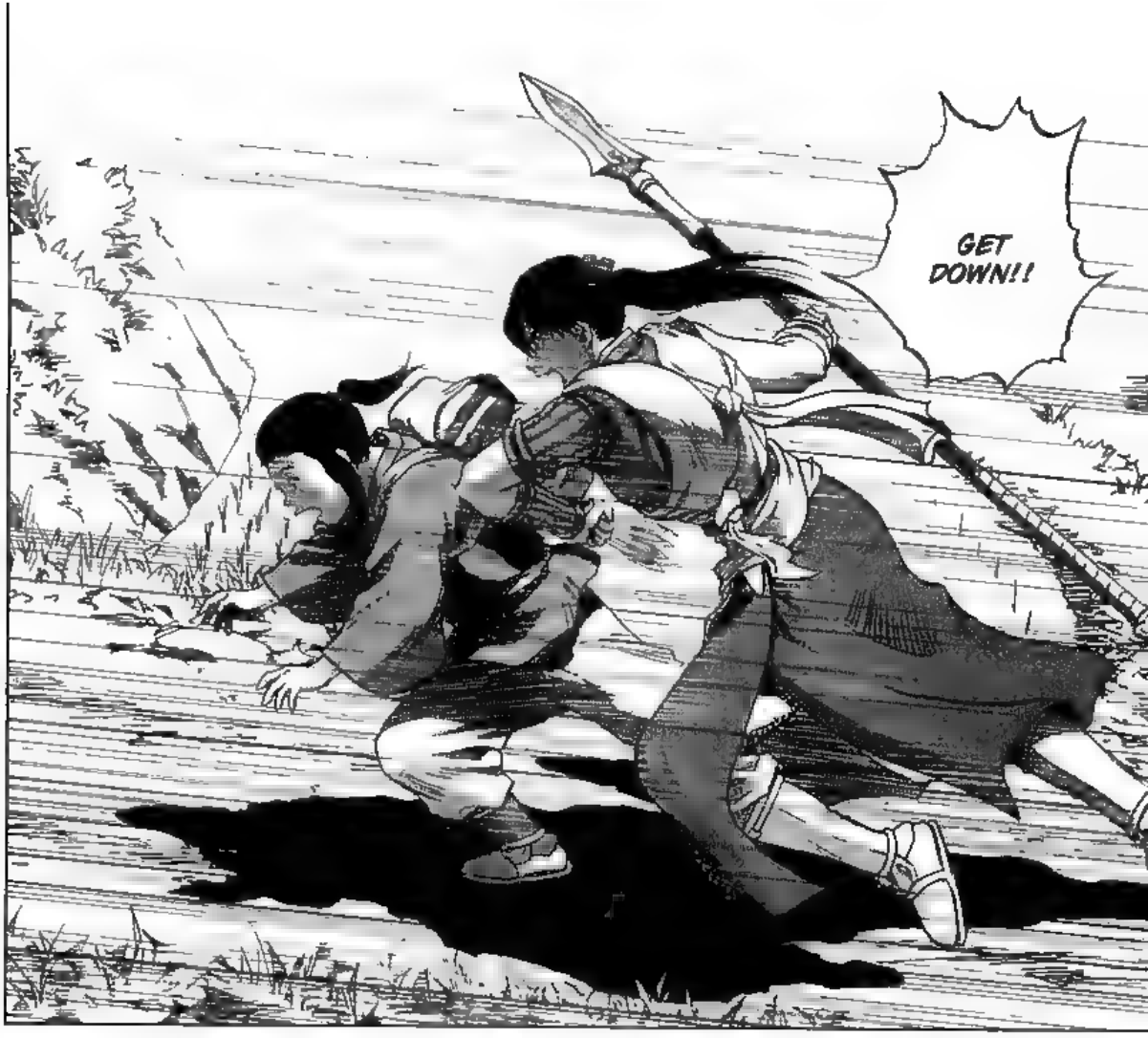
IF THEY FIND OUT...

!?
THE TWO MOONS AREN'T EVEN FULL YET...

THAT WE'RE WALKING IN AN OPEN AREA...

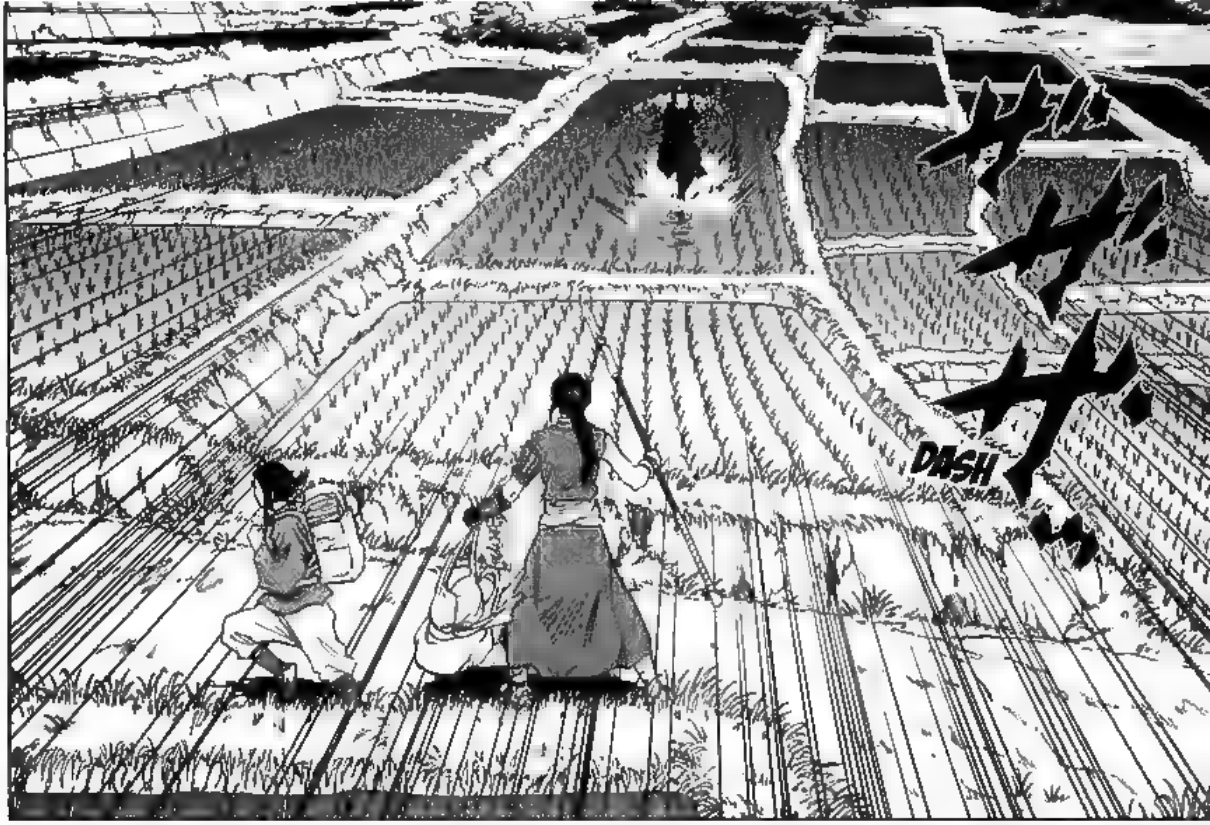
THIS IS WHERE THEY WILL ATTACK US

SLIP
?
STAY IN FRONT OF ME, CHAGUM.
RUSTLE
!!


GET DOWN!!

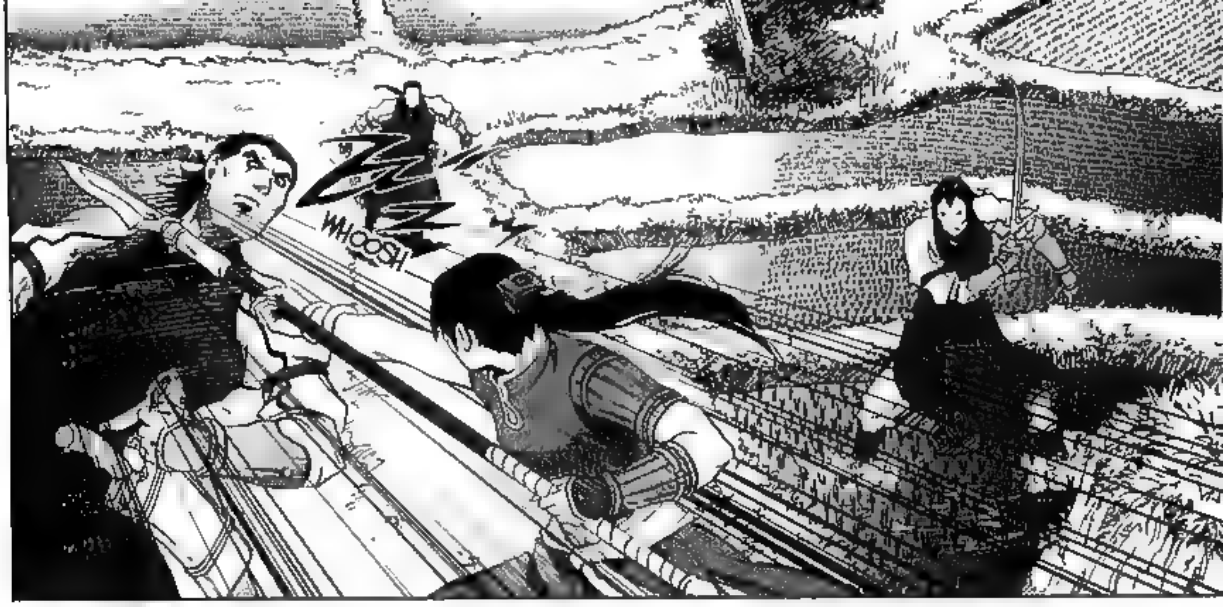
THERE!!
WOOSH

DASH
RUSTLE
I MIS-SED!
DAMN,
RUN, CHAGUM!!

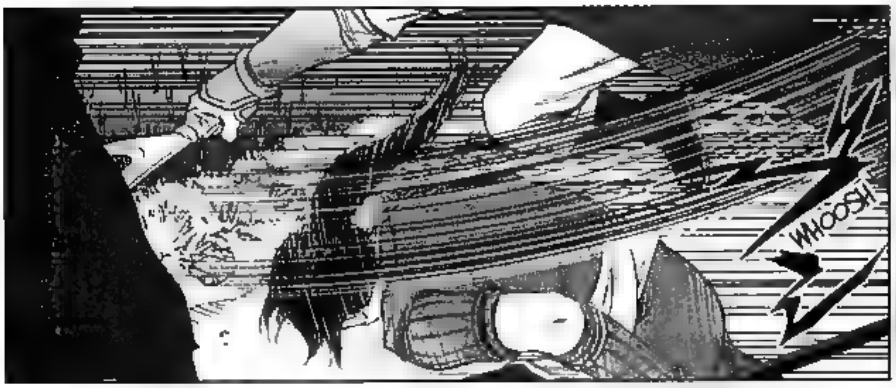

DASH

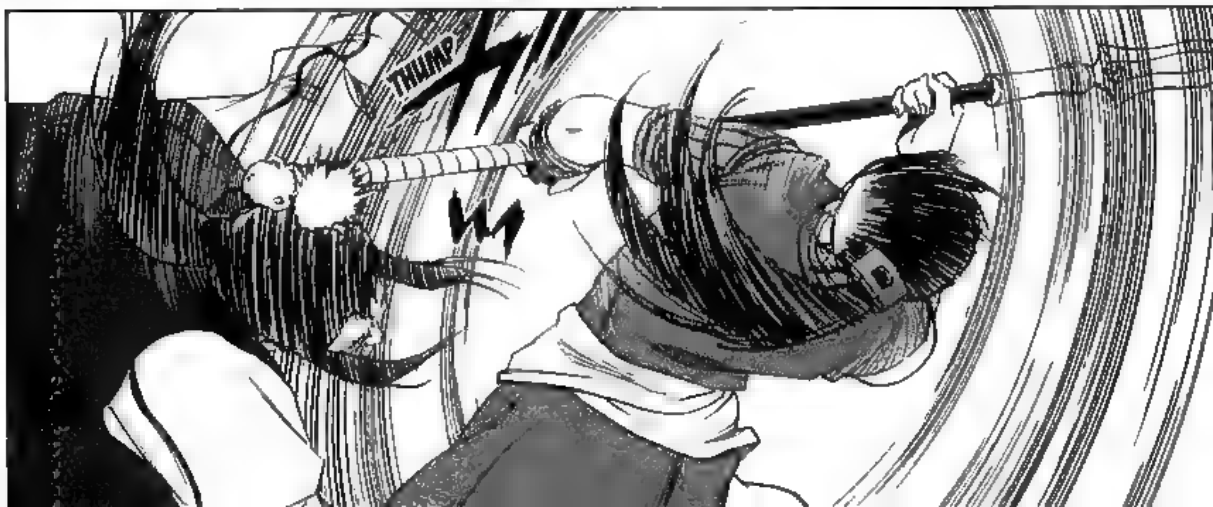
HE'S QUICK!!

FWISH
CLANG


WHOOSH!

FWIP

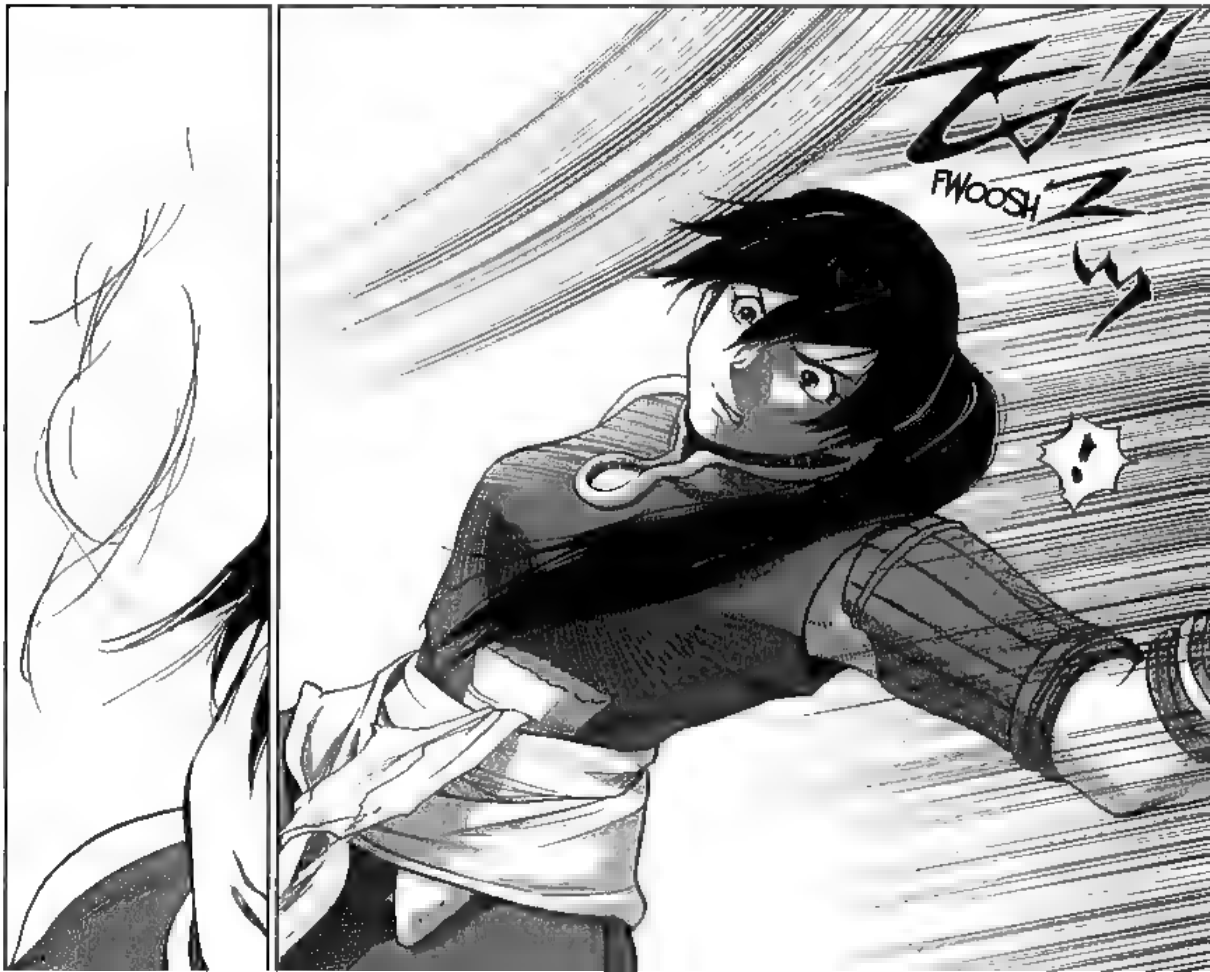

WHOOSH!


THUMP

FWISH
THUD

FWISH

WHOOSH
CLANK

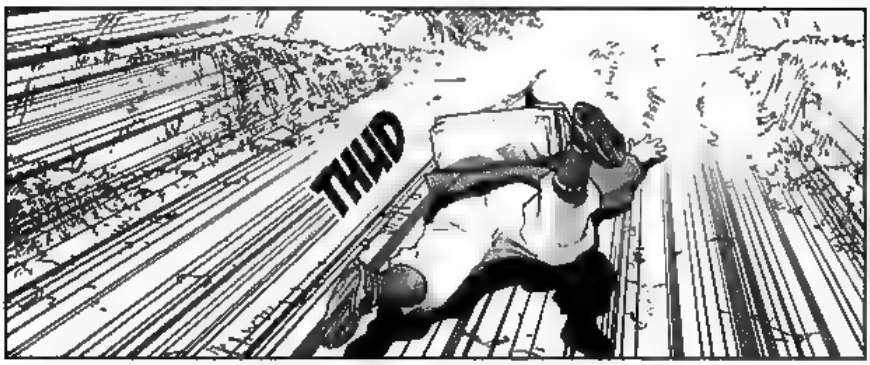

FWOOSH

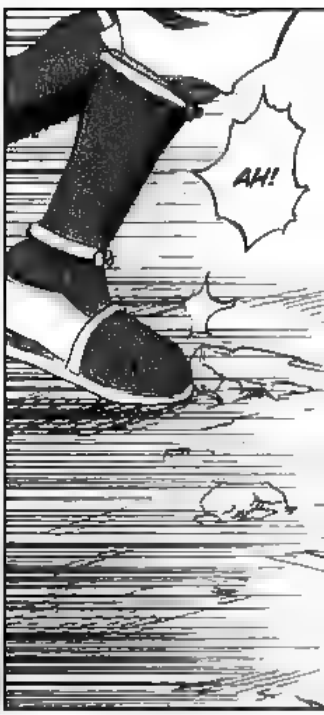
CLANG
BAM

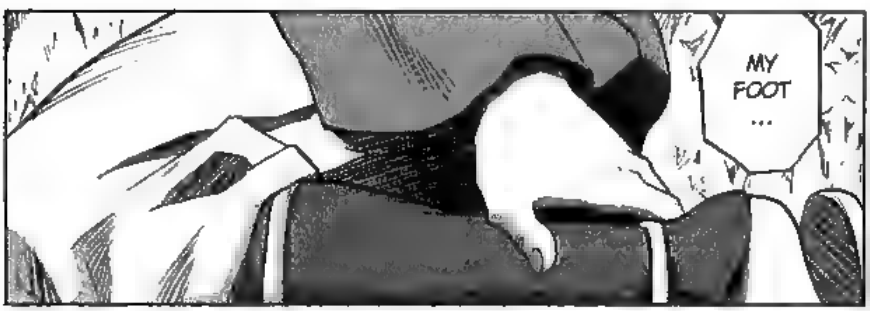
I CAN'T FIND AN OPENING TO ATTACK. BUT I'LL GET NOWHERE IF I JUST KEEP ON DEFENDING...
UGH!
HI
WHOOSH
SWISH
CLANG

WHAT KIND OF MOVES ARE THESE...? AS SOON AS I STRIKE WITH MY SWORD, SHE MANEUVERS HERSELF OUT... MY SWORD IS ALREADY GETTING TATTERED.

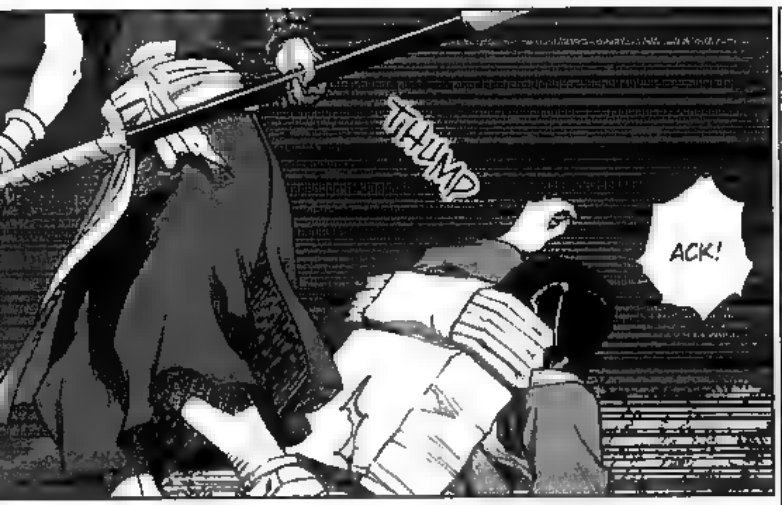
BALSA...


THUD


AH!

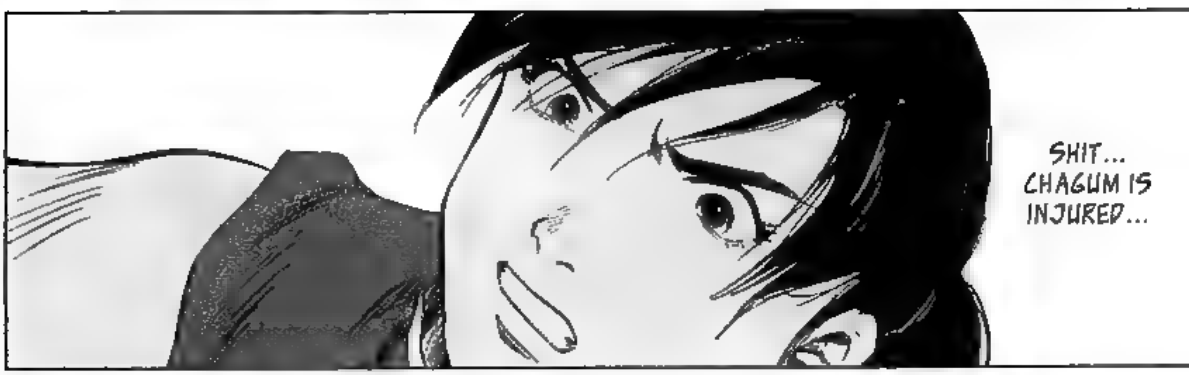

MY FOOT ...

URGH...


THUMP
ACK!

DASH

WHAT
!?
!!


SHIT...
CHAGUM IS
INJURED...

WHOOSH

!!
CLANG

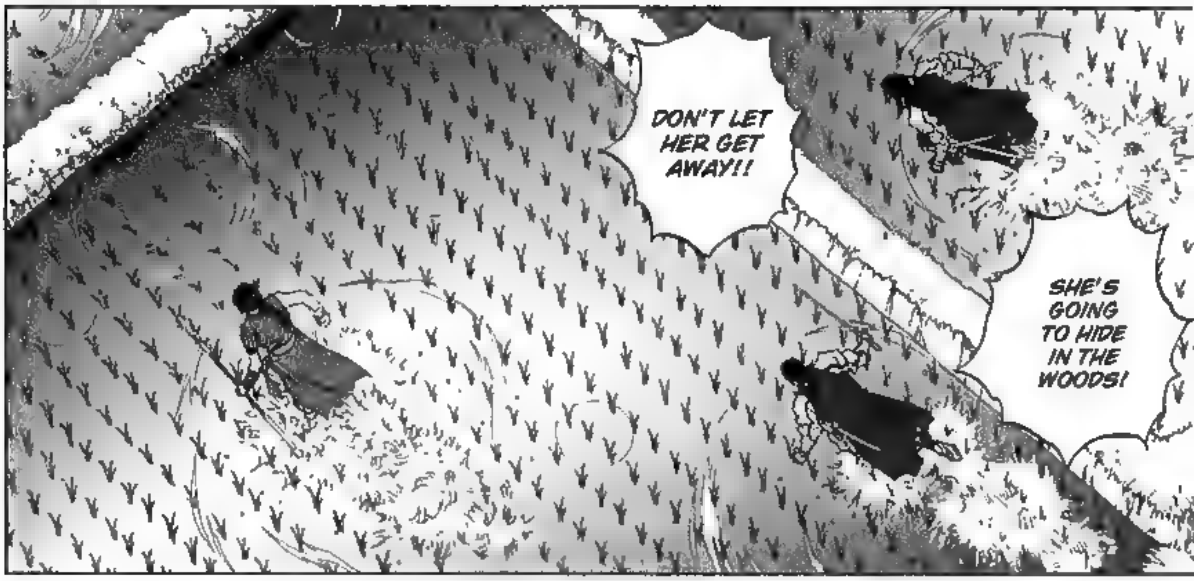
ONLY SAY ONE THING!
THEIR MOVEMENTS...

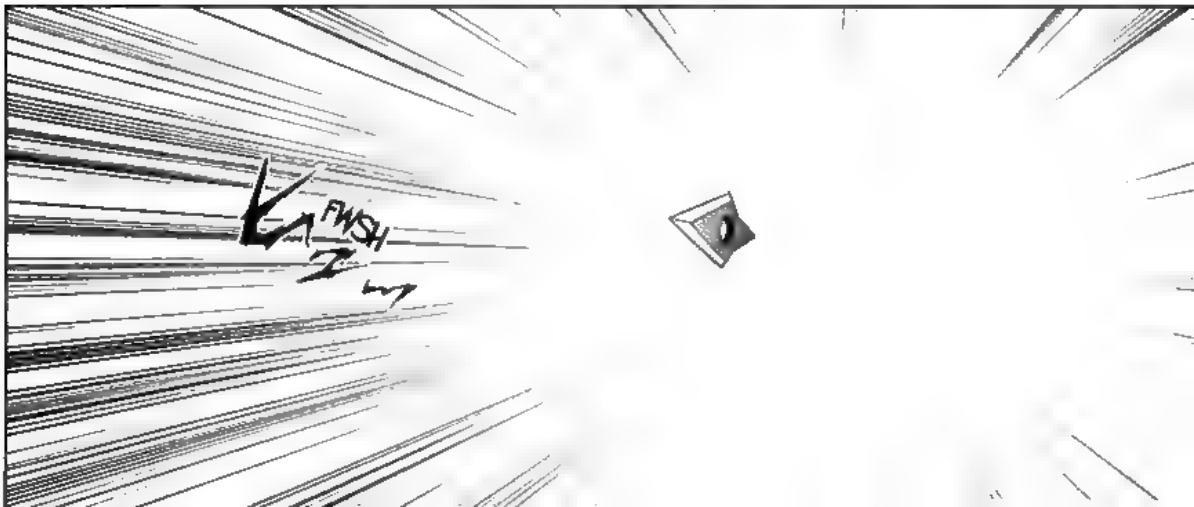
IT'S ONLY ME THEY'RE TARGETING! THEN THAT MEANS...

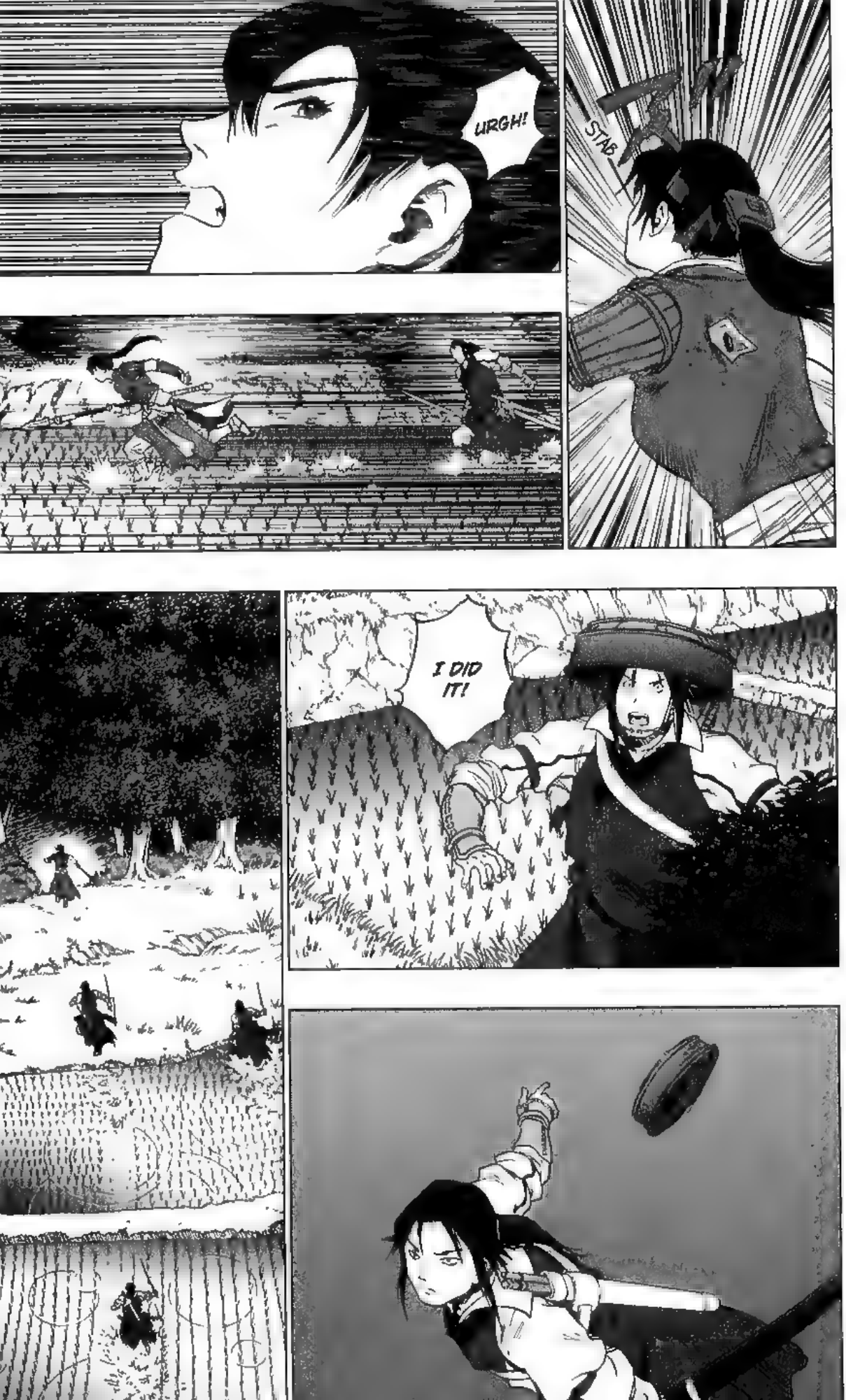
FWSH

WHAP
FWIP
AGH!
WHOOSH

!
DASH


DON'T LET HER GET AWAY!!
SHE'S GOING TO HIDE IN THE WOODS!


KA
FWSH

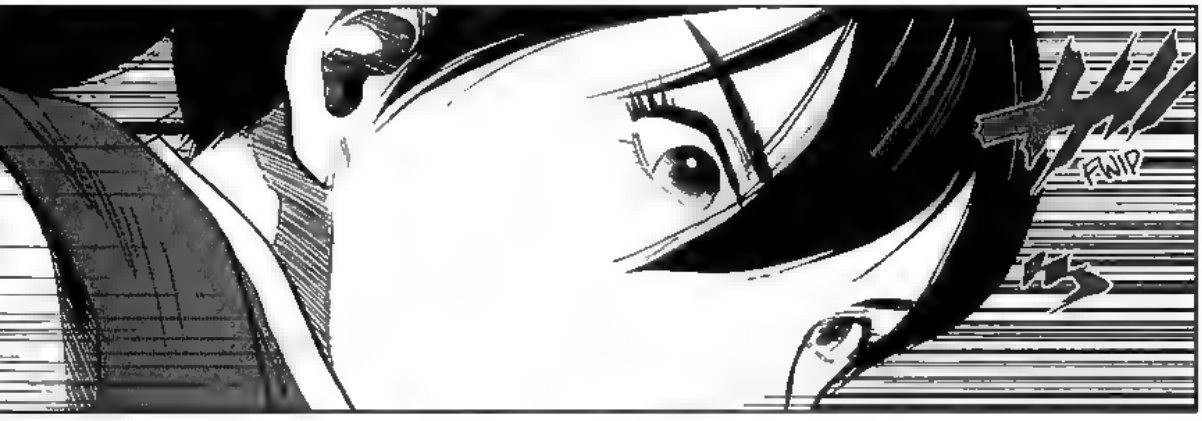

URGH!
STAB
I DID IT!

SNIPE
WHIRL

GUW AAH!
WHAP
!!

CRASH
KSHHH
FWIP

WHAP


FWIP

WHAT?! SHE'S STILL LUNGING IN AFTER I'VE HIT HER!!
WHOOSH

!!
CRACK

I'LL GO AFTER HER.
YOU BRING IN THE CHIEF AND TAKE THE PRINCE.

THE CHIEF!

WAIT!!

WHERE
IS SHE
HIDING..

SHE'S WOUNDED... ANYONE ELSE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO HOLD THEIR POSITION RIGHT NOW JUST FROM THE PAIN AND THE FEAR OF BEING CHASED.

I'VE HEARD ALL THE RUMORS, BUT I NEVER THOUGHT SHE WOULD BE THIS SKILLED...
BUT SHE HAS COMPLETELY SUPPRESSED ALL SIGNS OF HER PRESENCE.

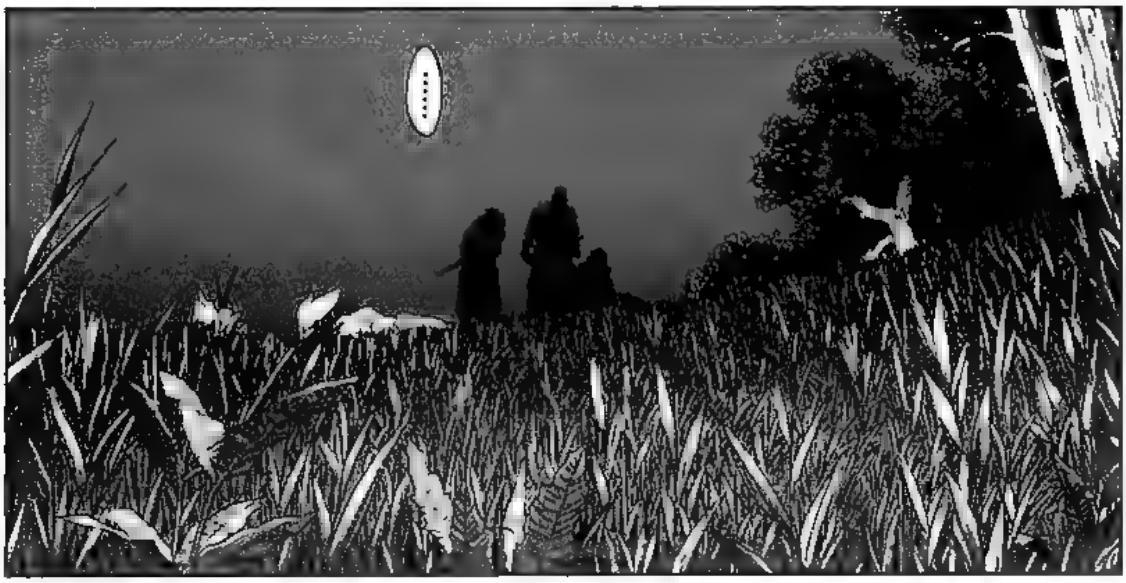
WHETHER I WAIT FOR HER TO MOVE OR GO NOW AND HELP THE OTHER THREE WHO WERE WOUNDED... NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS NOW, WE HAVE ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL.
BUT NO MATTER HOW YOU PUT IT, SHE'S FAILED.

WE PUT THE PRINCE TO SLEEP. WHAT HAPPENED TO BALSA?

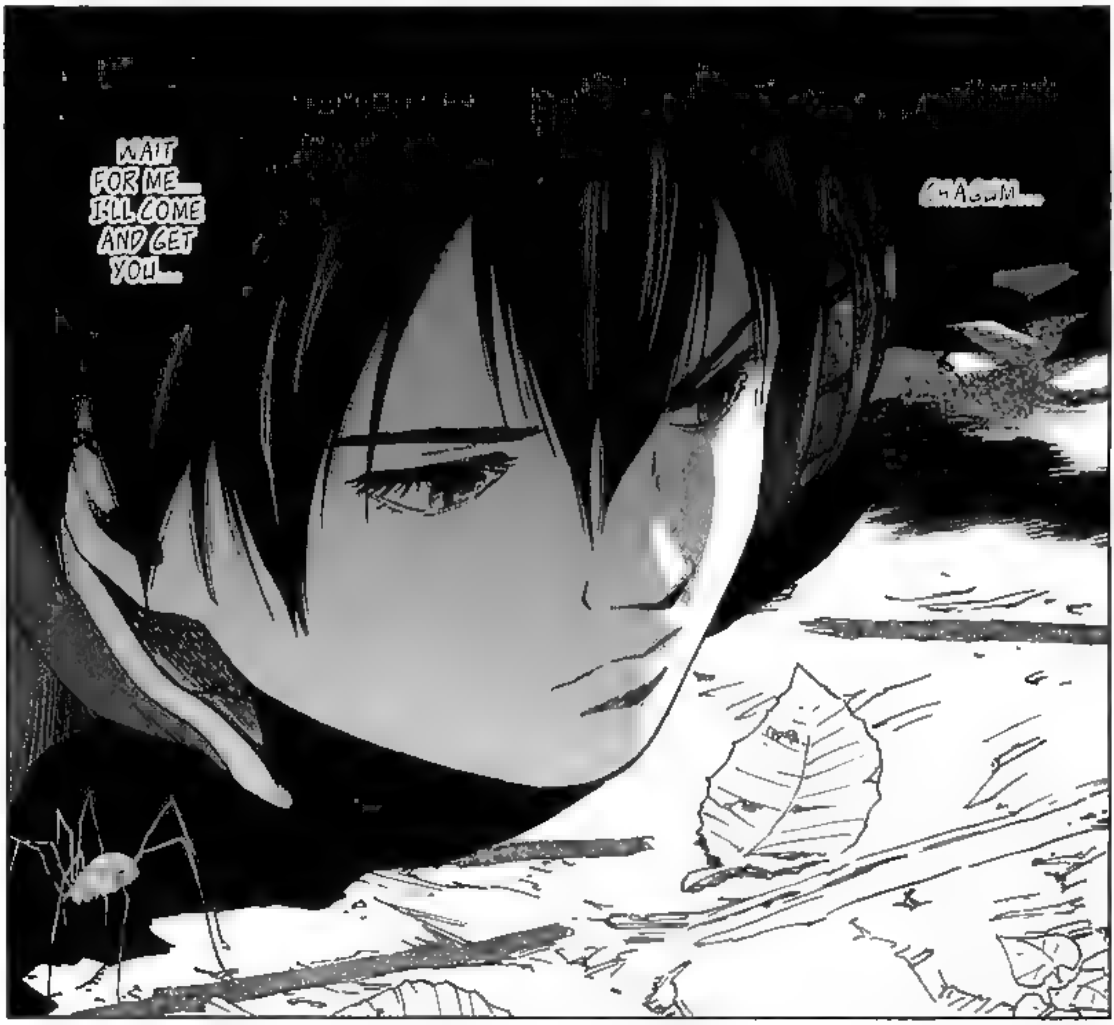
I'LL TAKE THE PRINCE. WE'LL GO ALONG THE TORINAKI RIVER AND ENTER THE SHRINE WITHOUT HAVING TO GO THROUGH THE TOWN.
SHE'S DEFINITELY USED TO HAVING HER LIFE IN DANGER. SHE'S COMPLETELY HIDDEN ALL TRACES OF HER PRESENCE.

DON'T ENTER THROUGH THE TOWN. YOU'RE GOING TO STAND OUT LOOKING LIKE THAT.
YOU AND ZEN CARRY THE CHIEF. TAKE YOUR TIME AND FOLLOW.

THAT BITCH...


.....

I SCREWED UP... BUT MY WOUNDS ARE SHALLOW, IT'S NOT GOING TO HURT FOR LONG.


WAIT FOR ME... I'LL COME AND GET YOU...
CHAOUM...

Seirei no Moribito

by Uehashi Nahoko, Futatsugi Saki, & Fujiwara Kamui

Chapter 5

raws > Ishitori
translator > Den
editor > Isoganaide
qc > Ishitori

The End

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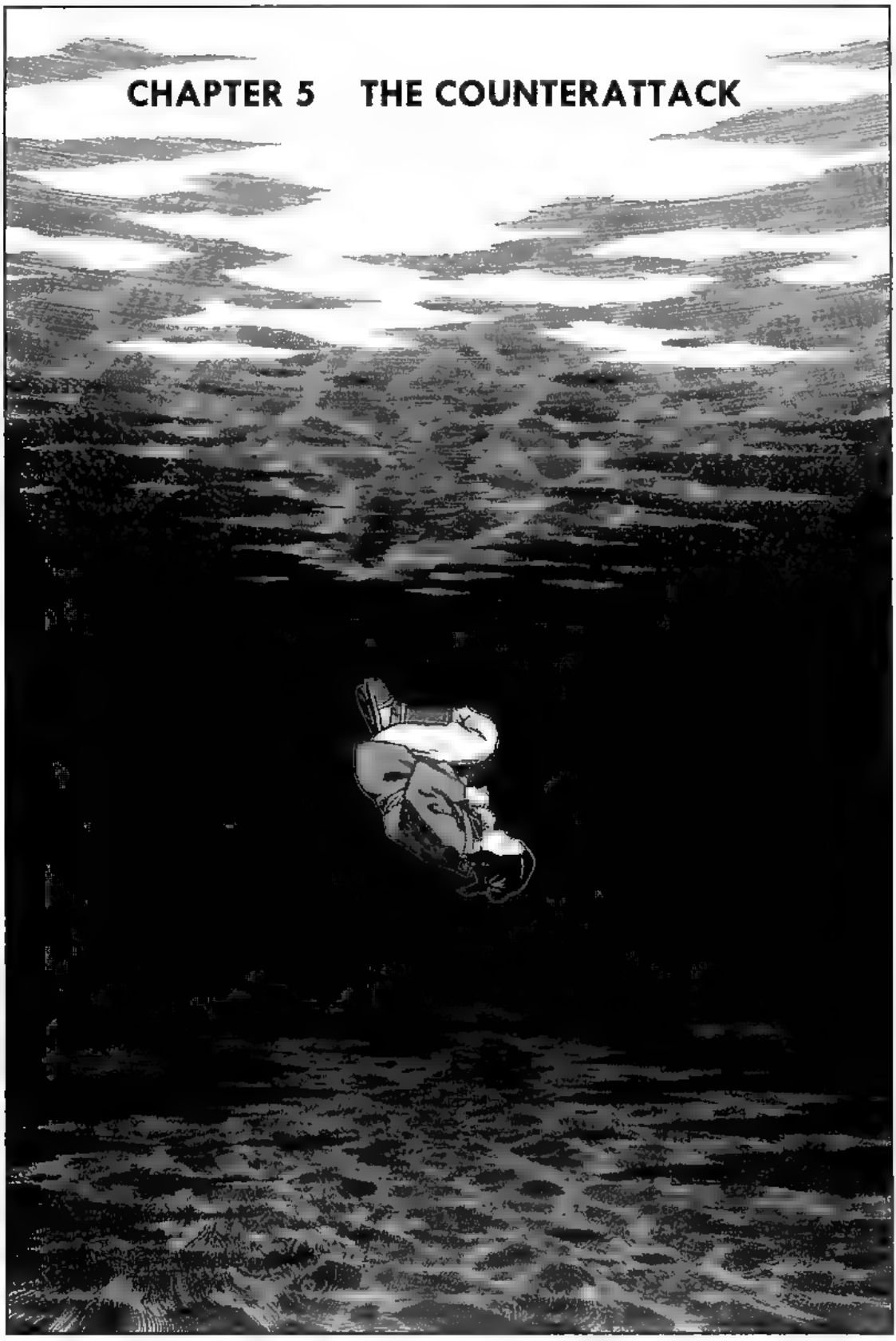
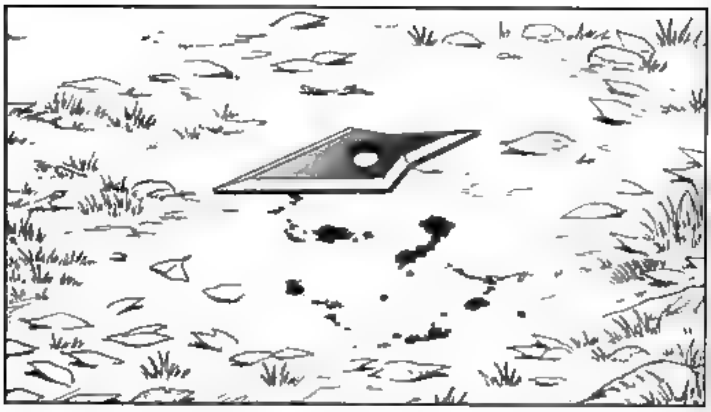
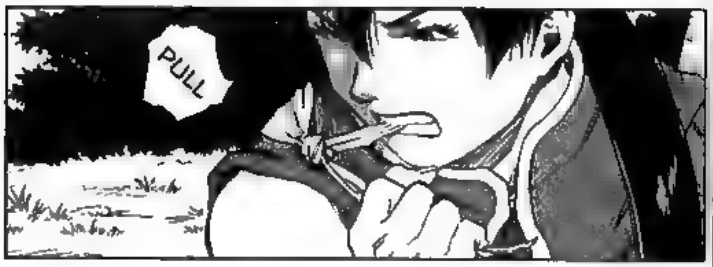
CHAPTER 5 THE COUNTERATTACK



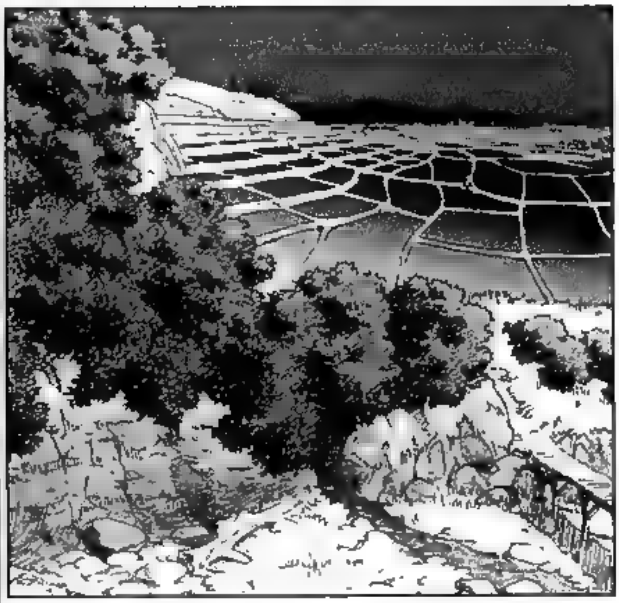


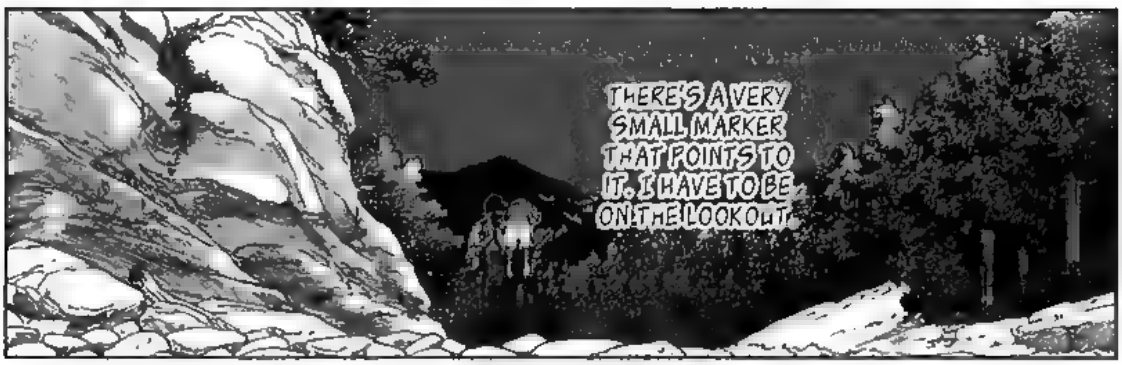

PULL

IT'S JUST A FLESH WOUND... THIS WILL DO FOR NOW.

AND THEY'RE SPLITTING UP. MY LUCK IS LOOKING UP...
THEY'RE CARRYING OFF CHAGUM

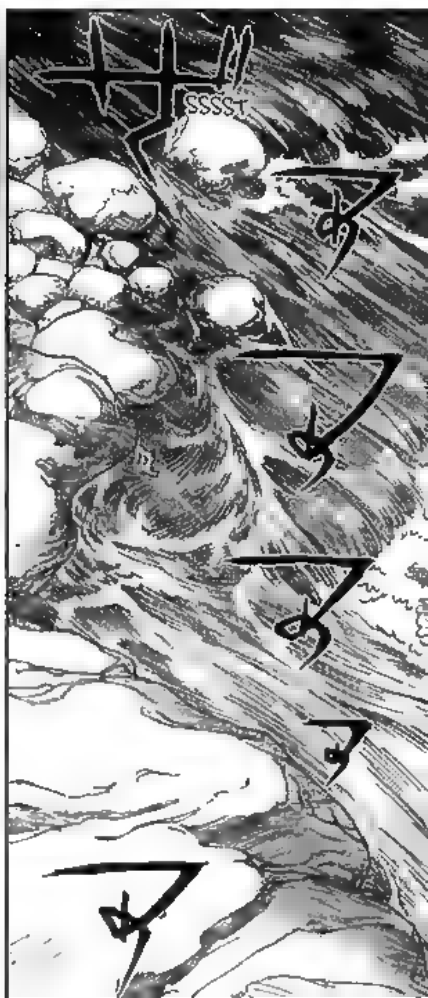
vhooooosh

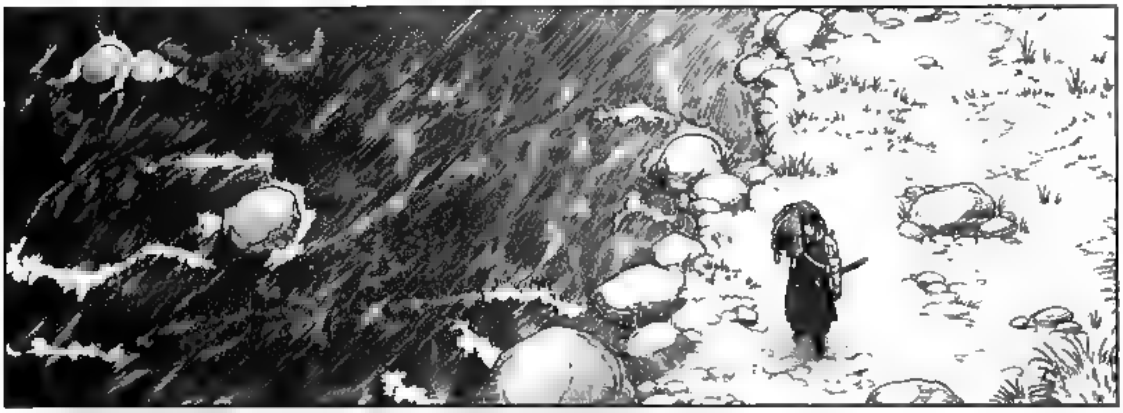




AM I GETTING TOO STRESSED? IS IT JUST MY INEXPERIENCE?

WHY IS THE RIVER SO LOUD?

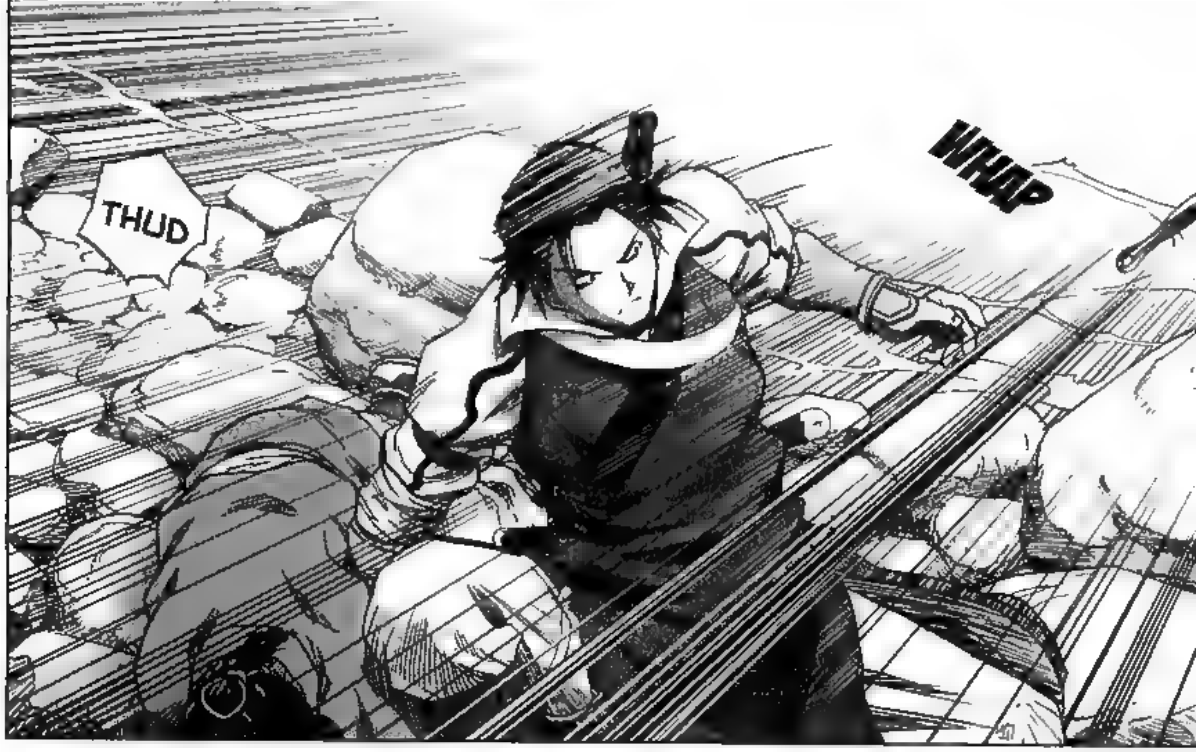




PANG

PUSH

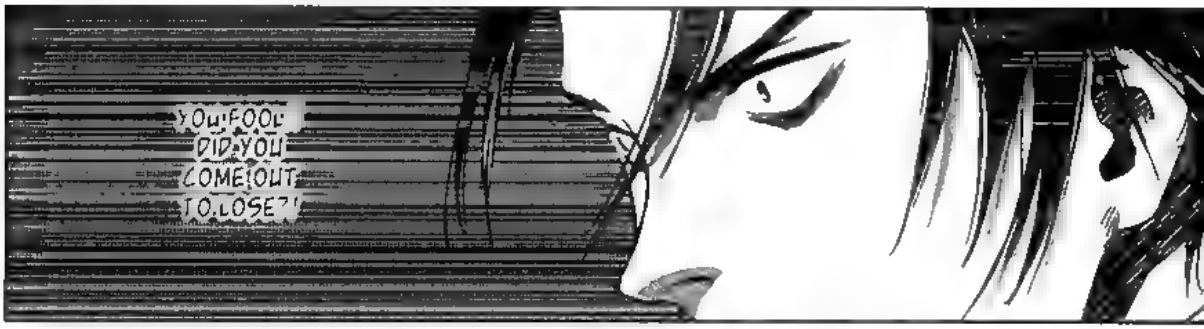
WHOOSH


THUD
WHAP

ZOOM

!!
CLANG

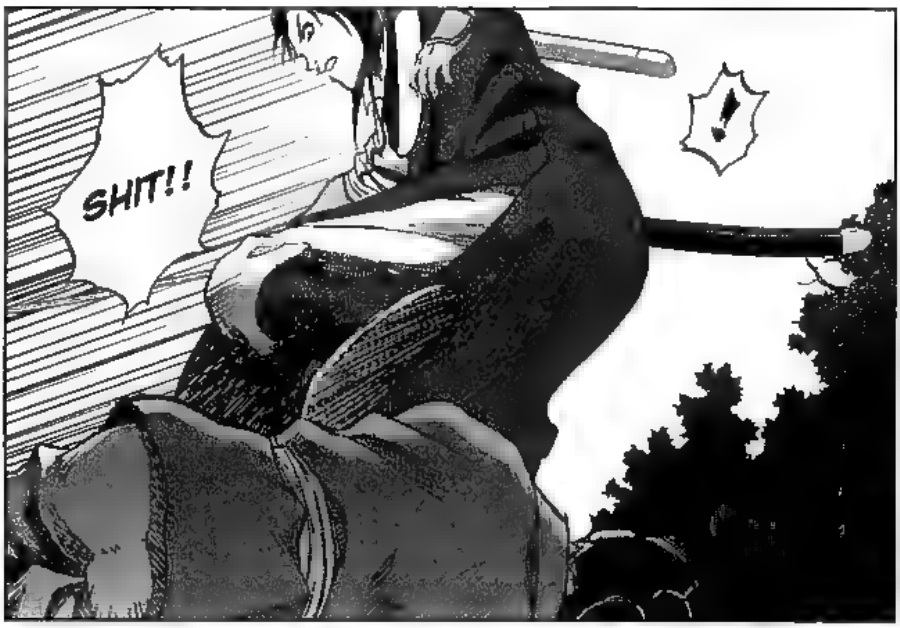
SHIT
I'M SSE


YOU FOOL
DID YOU
COME OUT
TO LOSE?!

SWISH

CLANG
CLANG
WHOOSH
GHG!
WHAP
STING
SWISH

FWISH


SHIT!!
!

BUMP

FWAP

FWIP

FWSH

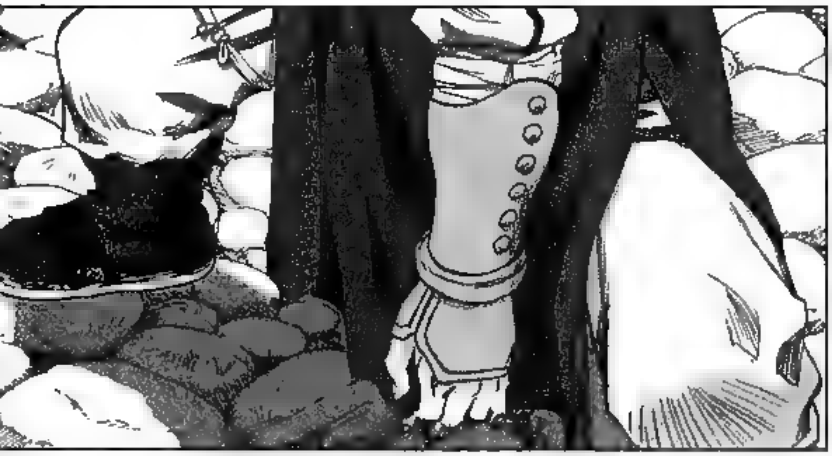
WHAP
CRASH
THUD

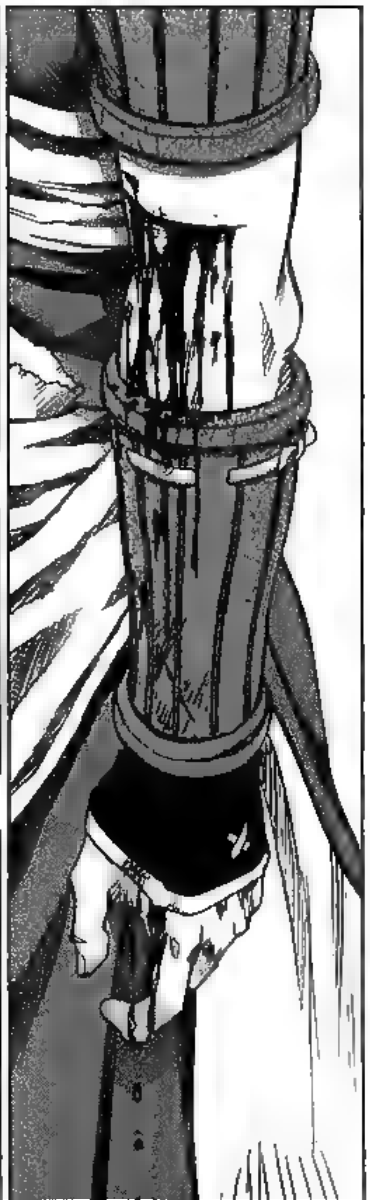
FWIP
UGH. MY BONES ARE...
!!
WH
AP
FWSH

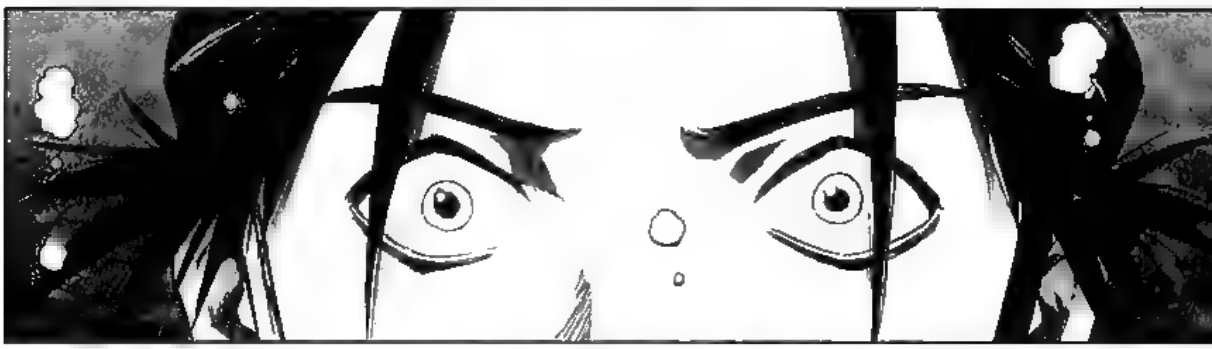
SWISH
WHOOSH
SLASH

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

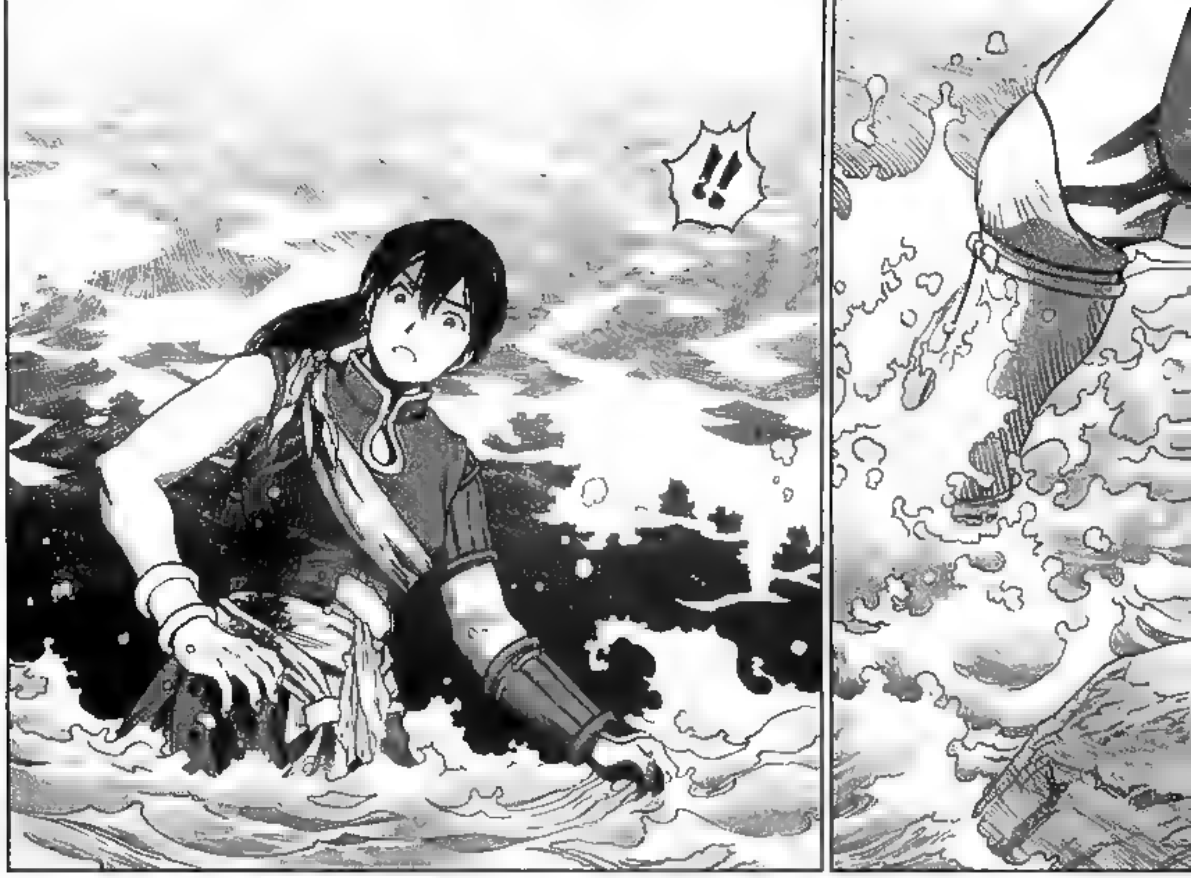






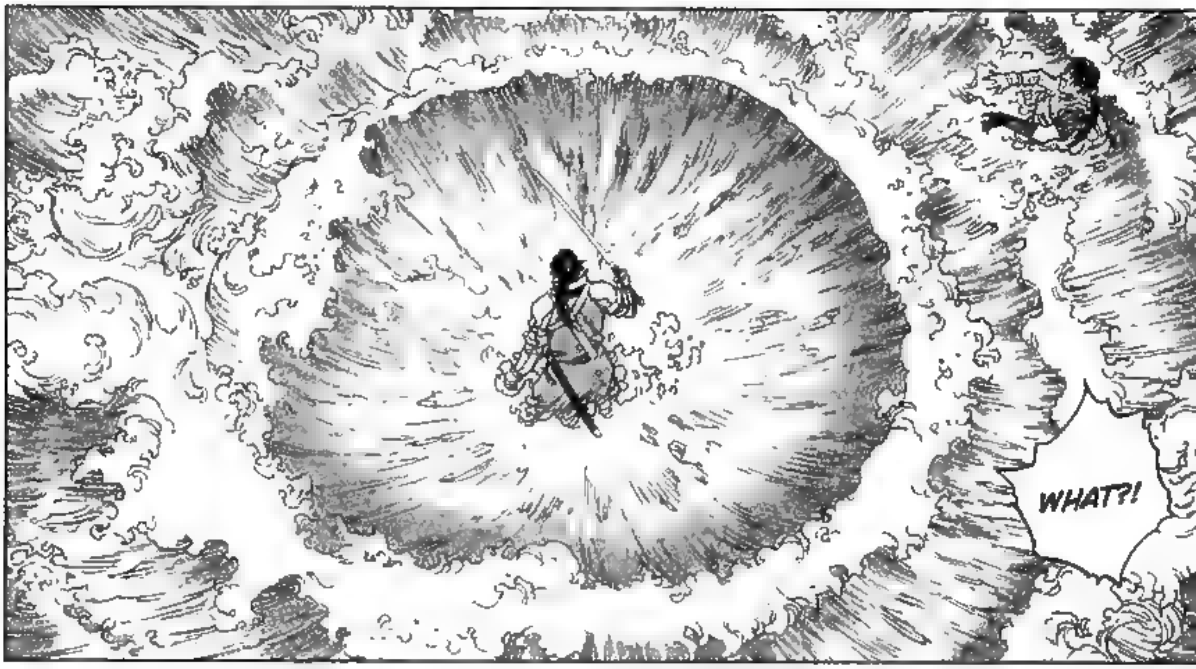
CHAGUM!!

WHAT...
IS THIS...


!!

THIS WATER... FEELS AS HEAVY AS GLUE...

SPLASH


WHAT?!

BOOM
BUWAH!

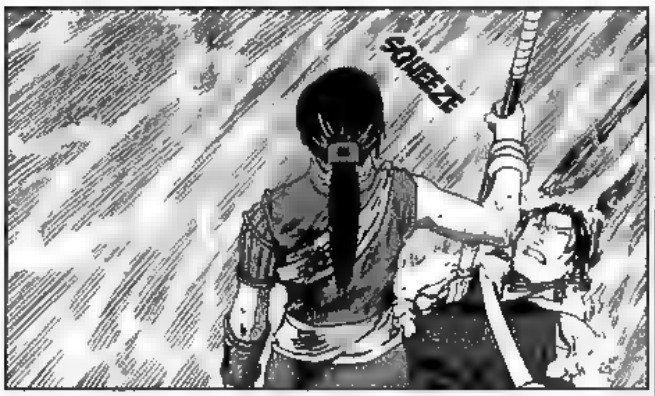
BAL...
SA...

COUGH
COUGH

CLINK

SPLASH

STAB

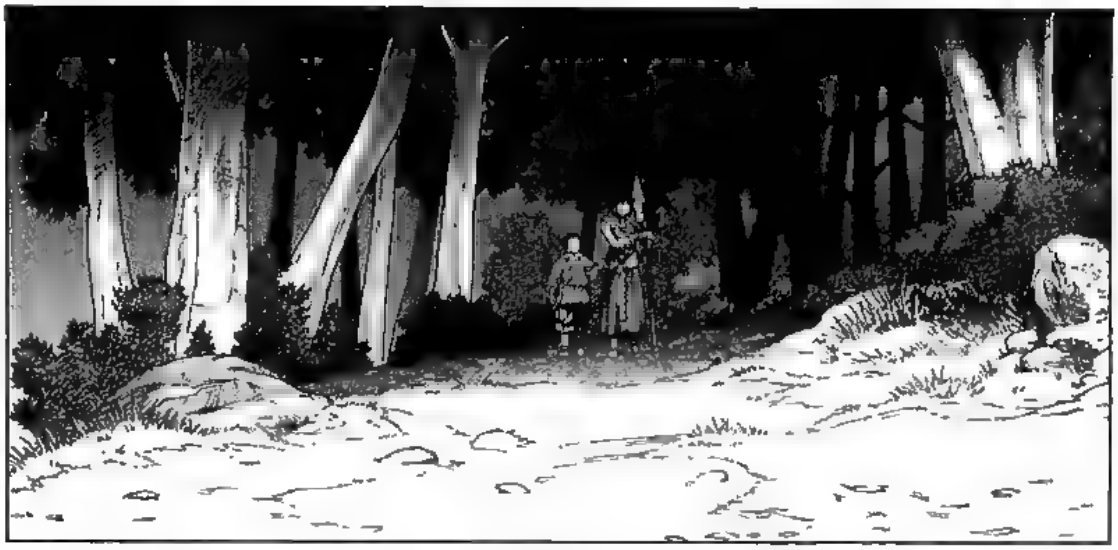

SQUEEZE

YOU...

POP

GAAH!

BALSA!
.....
.....
SLASH
YEAH...
BALSA... ARE YOU ALRIGHT?



I CAN'T...
GO ON...
HUFF
HUFF

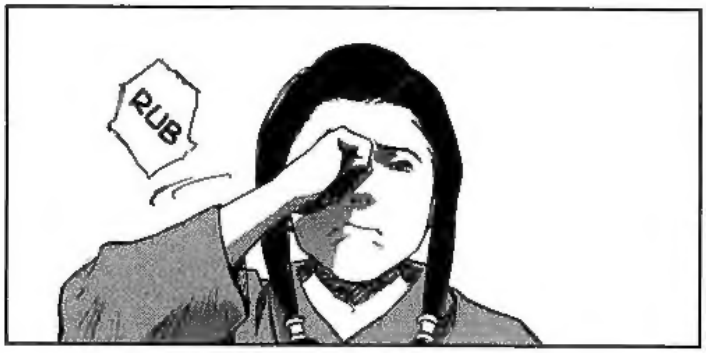
wobble

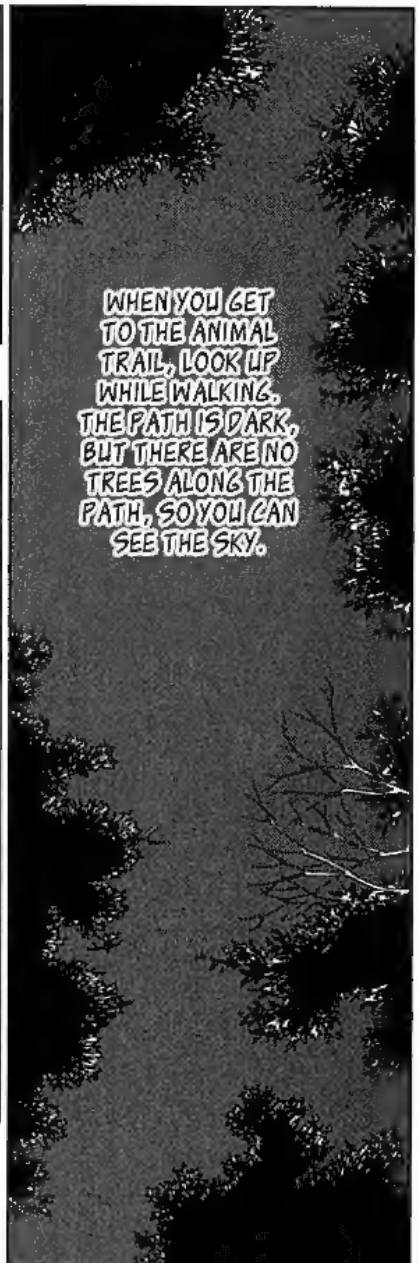
BALSA!!

NOD
CHAGUM, LISTEN TO ME...
CAN YOU STILL WALK?

THERE'S AN ANIMAL TRAIL BEHIND IT. IF YOU FOLLOW THAT TRAIL, YOU'LL SEE A HUT IN A SMALL GRASSLAND.
IF YOU FOLLOW ALONG THIS RIVER, YOU'LL SEE A CLIFF SHAPED LIKE THE BACK OF A BIG BEAR...
A BEAR'S BACK ...
A BEAR'S BACK...
THEN... I'M GOING TO NEED YOUR HELP.

A BEAR'S BACK...
THERE'S A MAN CALLED TANDA WHO LIVES THERE. TELL HIM WHAT HAPPENED AND ASK FOR HIS HELP...


RUB


WHEN YOU GET TO THE ANIMAL TRAIL, LOOK UP WHILE WALKING. THE PATH IS DARK, BUT THERE ARE NO TREES ALONG THE PATH, SO YOU CAN SEE THE SKY.

RUSTLE
!!

……

AH!

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF